The UNESCO Courier

A window open on the world

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A lost metropolis of 4,000 years ago discovered in Syria

TREASURES
OF
WORLD ART

117

Zaire

Mask with half moon eyes

The face of this African mask is reduced essentially to the eyes, shaped like half moons with slits and set on white oval backgrounds. It is a ceremonial mask of the Bembe (or Wabembe) people of north-east Zaire, near Lake Tanganyika. Like most other African peoples, the Bembe use a great variety of masks for initiation ceremonies and other rituals.

Photo © Luc Joubert, Paris

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Photo © Paolo Matthiae, Italy

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Cover

An Italian archaeological mission, working in Syria in collaboration with the Syrian Arab Republic's Department of Antiquities, has discovered the site of Ebla, an ancient metropolis whose location was completely unknown. The excavations have thrown new light on the history of Syria 4,000 years ago, since archaeologists have also unearthed the city's archives, written in an unknown language that is now being deciphered. Professor Paolo Matthiae, who directed the excavations, describes the extraordinary finds in an article specially written for the *Unesco Courier* (published on page 6). Cover shows detail of a lustral bowl from Ebla: a double frieze depicting warriors and lions. (See also page 7.)

During a ceremony which took place on 10 January 1977 at the Acropolis in Athens. Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco. (below, with Mr Constantine Trypanis, Greek Minister of Culture and the Sciences), launched an appeal for an international campaign to save the monuments of the historic Acropolis site which have seriously deteriorated in the past few years. We publish here the text of the appeal.

The Greek government has already taken important measures to help preserve the threatened buildings and statues. Castings have been made of the Caryatids, for instance, with a view to removing them to a national museum until a solution can be found for the problem of stone disease.
In addition to damage from water and frost, from the rusting of metal construction frames, from erosion and from the consequences of intensive tourism, the Acropolis is now suffering from the terrible effects of atmospheric pollution on stone.

The magnitude, complexity and urgency of the problem has led to the drawing up, at the request of the Greek authorities and in collaboration with them, of a plan of action to be carried out within the framework of an international campaign approved by the Unesco General Conference at its last session in Nairobi (Kenya) in October-November 1976. The goal is to preserve a great cultural heritage which, although essentially Greek, is nevertheless the concern of all mankind.

According to joint Greek-Unesco estimates the operation will cost $ 15 million and take between five and ten years to complete.

The "Unesco Courier" intends to devote a future issue to the history of the Acropolis and the problems posed by its preservation.

■ *To enable readers to respond to this appeal we publish on page 34 details of how and where to send contributions.*

THE ACROPOLIS IN DANGER

An appeal by the Director-General of Unesco
Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

Photo Unesco - Simon Callery

The Acropolis is in danger...

After resisting the onslaughts of weather and human assailants for 2,400 years, this magnificent monument, on which Ictinos and Phidias left the imprint of their genius, is threatened with destruction as a result of the damage which industrial civilization has increasingly inflicted on it for a number of years past.

So far, thanks to the restoration work carried out since the 19th century by the Greek Department of Archaeology, supplemented more recently by special conservation measures, the three million or so visitors who now throng to the Acropolis each year have still been able to admire, in the splendour of the incomparable Attic light, the glorious testimony to that excellence which characterized the Golden Age of Pericles and which has remained, throughout the centuries, for so many countries of the world, a unique source of inspiration in the field of art and thought.

Today, however, the dilapidation has reached such proportions that the temples, sculptures and foundations can no longer be preserved unless a vast and complex programme of conservation work is put in hand without delay. From the technical and scientific point of view, this calls for detailed studies, for which it would be difficult for the Greek Government to accept sole responsibility, despite all it is doing already.

Some of the damage is caused by water seeping

Photo Dominique Roger - Unesco

into the cracks and by frost. Elsewhere, the marble is splitting because of the rusting of the iron bars and ties used in the past to keep the stones safely in position. Steps, pavements and rock are being worn away by the feet of countless visitors. But to all this has been added another cause of damage, far more serious even than these. This is atmospheric pollution, the price we pay for industrial progress, which is causing the rapid deterioration of the stone by the action of factory gases and smoke from domestic hearths.

Until such time as a suitable zone of purified air can be established round the Acropolis, simultaneous action is needed so that on-the-spot protection can be provided for whatever sculptures can be so preserved, so that the remainder can be removed and transferred to the Acropolis Museum, being replaced for the time being with plaster-casts, and so that rusting trusses can be replaced with a non-rusting alloy, improved paths and intersections provided in order to channel the flow of visitors, and the rock strengthened where landslides and subsidence occur, and the necessary restoration work put in hand wherever this is possible.

The work needing to be done is, by its very extent, a challenge to the international community which cannot accept with resignation the catastrophe threatening the Parthenon, the Erechtheum and its caryatids, the Propylaea and the temple of Athena Nike. For this reason, and in response to the appeal made to it by the Greek Government, the General Conference of Unesco, at its nineteenth session recently held in Nairobi, by acclamation declared itself in favour of a world-wide campaign, to be conducted under the Organization's auspices, to rally public and private support with a view to safeguarding the Acropolis.

Unesco, whose Constitution lays upon it responsibility for the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of works of art and monuments of history and science, is thus called upon to encourage the international community to make common cause in order to save cultural treasures which, although they belong to the heritage of Greece, are also part of the shared inheritance of mankind. In doing this, its intention is, by publicizing needs, co-ordinating offers of help, soliciting external contributions and seeing that they are made available as and when most effective, in agreement with the Greek authorities, according to needs and possibilities, to support the work of the many friends of Greece throughout the world who are ready to provide direct assistance and co-operation.

This is why I am launching here a solemn appeal to the conscience of the world so that the Acropolis may be saved, just as my predecessors appealed for the monuments of Nubia in Upper Egypt, for Venice, for the temple of Borobudur in Indonesia, for the archaeological site at Mohenjodaro in Pakistan, and for Carthage in Tunisia.

In the name of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, I invite governments, the National Commissions for Unesco, public and private institutions and the general public in the Organization's 141 Member States to be generous in providing the assistance, whether money, equipment or services, needed to carry out the great task on which the Greek Government has embarked. Though the resources with which it has done so are considerable, they are insufficient to complete a project which will necessarily last several years.

I invite the intergovernmental organizations of all continents, and in particular those of Europe, as well as all foundations whose activities contribute to cultural progress, to join in the immense task which the Greek Government is undertaking in cooperation with Unesco.

I invite the international specialist organizations which participate with Unesco in safeguarding mankind's cultural heritage, such as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, the International Council of Monuments and Sites and the International Council of Museums, to support the activities undertaken as part of the world campaign and to encourage further steps to the same end.

I invite museums, art galleries, libraries and theatres, in which the resplendent genius of Athens is reflected, to arrange exhibitions, performances and displays devoted to safeguarding the Acropolis, the proceeds being paid into the funds set up in Member States or the International Fund established by Unesco.

I invite artists, writers, critics, historians and composers the well-springs of whose work are in Ancient Greece, and all those whose task is to provide information, such as newspapermen, columnists, press, radio and television journalists and filmmakers, to assist us with their knowledge and their talents in arousing the support of the general public in all countries.

I also invite schoolchildren, students and teachers in all schools and universities to organize collections, especially in conjunction with the National Commissions for Unesco in their countries. The proceeds from these collections will go towards preserving the crowning glory of a civilization to which art, science and philosophy, even in our modern world, still owe an immense debt of gratitude.

Finally, I invite all those millions of people who have already visited or who intend to visit Athens, as well as those who perhaps will never have that opportunity but who sense clearly, whatever the cultural area to which they belong, that the treasures of the Acropolis testify in the highest degree to the creative genius of man, to make a contribution, however modest, which will enable them to give a little of themselves to the collective effort.

I do not doubt that mankind will once more rise to the need and prove equal to the task of saving its heritage, and that in this way, over and above the diversity of ideologies and systems, further progress will be made in realizing that spiritual unity sought by the nations of our world, in their growing awareness of interdependence and a common destiny and their desire to establish a new order founded on the brotherhood of their peoples.

■ **Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow**

EBLA

a lost metropolis of 4,000 years ago discovered in Syria

by Paolo Matthiae

PAOLO MATTHIAE, *Italian archaeologist, is director of the Institute of Near Eastern studies and professor of Near Eastern archaeology and art history at the university of Rome. Since 1964 he has directed the work of the Italian archaeological mission to Syria whose excavations led to the discovery of the city of Ebla. This research was carried out in collaboration with the Syrian Arab Republic's department of antiquities (Damascus). The author of many studies on art and archaeology, he is currently working on a critical revision of the history of art in the ancient Near East in the light of his discoveries at Ebla.*

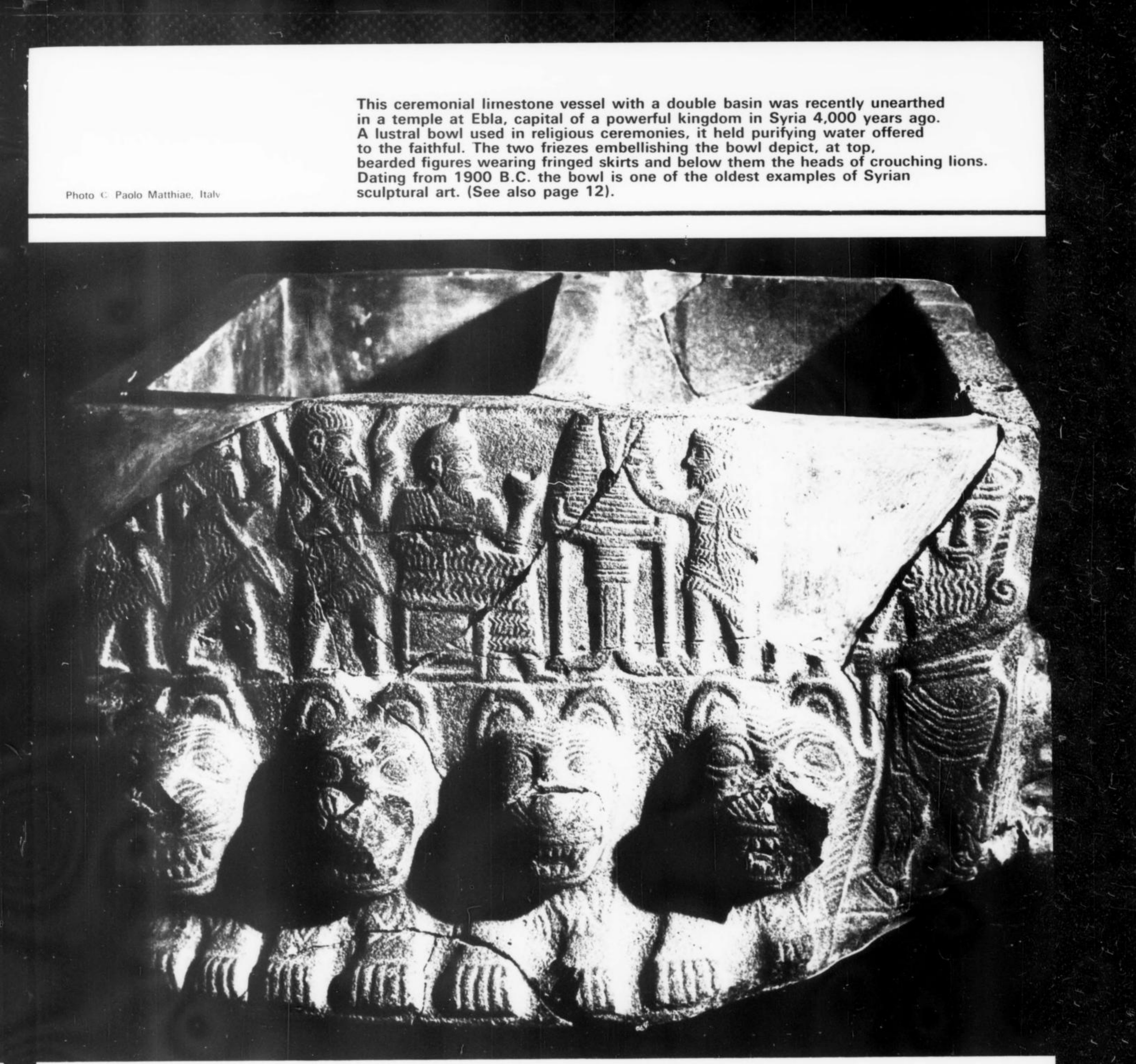


Photo © Paolo Matthiae, Italy

This ceremonial limestone vessel with a double basin was recently unearthed in a temple at Ebla, capital of a powerful kingdom in Syria 4,000 years ago. A lustral bowl used in religious ceremonies, it held purifying water offered to the faithful. The two friezes embellishing the bowl depict, at top, bearded figures wearing fringed skirts and below them the heads of crouching lions. Dating from 1900 B.C. the bowl is one of the oldest examples of Syrian sculptural art. (See also page 12).

THE recent discovery in Syria, not far from Aleppo, of the 4,000-year-old royal archives of the kingdom of Ebla is an event that could revolutionize historical studies of the ancient Near East. The remains of Ebla were brought to light by the Italian Archaeological Mission of the University of Rome.

It will require several decades to evaluate the full significance of the finds made in this Mesopotamian metropolis of Antiquity. This is because the texts inscribed on the clay tablets unearthed by the Italian archaeologists concern many sectors of the social and cultural life of the Near East during a period of great splendour (2300-2000 B.C.) about which only tenuous and fragmentary evidence has so far been available.

The value of the Ebla discovery extends far beyond the horizons of northern Syria and opens a window on the world of the Near East as a whole in ancient times.

Urban civilization began to develop during the later centuries of the fourth millennium B.C. in southern Mesopotamia where the number of cities progressively increased. Uruk, on the left bank of the Euphrates, was one remarkable example.

But the way in which this urban civilization spread through the Near East during the 3rd millennium B.C. is still shrouded in mystery, and particularly so in the region of Syria.

The evidence for the sequence of cultures comes from secondary sources such as archaeological remains unearthed around Antakya in Turkey or at Hamma in northern Syria.

Written records, in Mesopotamian, Sumerian and Akkadian texts are limited to the mention of a few cities conquered by the great kings of the dynasty of Akkad (2340-2220 B.C.), or tributaries of the kings of the third dynasty of Ur (circa 2120-2000 B.C.).

In the absence of any detailed archaeological or written evidence, historians have believed that the great Mesopotamian urban culture ▶

of the third millennium B.C., located in the region of the lower Euphrates and the Tigris, had provided a model from which all the forms of urban culture in the Near East were derived.

Research by the Italian Archaeological Mission of Rome University, begun in Syria in 1964, aimed to throw some light on the origins and the development of Syrian urban culture in relation to the Mesopotamian world.

The Italian Mission, under my direction, therefore planned a systematic archaeological excavation of Tell Mardikh, a large man-made mound lying about 60 kilometres south of Aleppo in Northern Syria. The mound was thought to cover the vestiges of an important urban centre. Permission to excavate was granted by the Syrian Arab Republic's Department of Antiquities, which gave the Italian mission constant support and close collaboration.

Excavations carried out between 1964 and 1972 on the uppermost part of the mound and at its centre revealed the existence of a major city. This metropolis is believed to have flourished between 2000 and 1700 to 1600 B.C., during the period of the Amorite dynasty in Mesopotamia, to which the great king Hammurabi of Babylon belonged.

Extending over 56 hectares and dominated by the acropolis built at the summit of the site, the city was protected by strong ramparts raised on earth platforms 60 metres thick.

Along the line of the ramparts were four monumental gates each defended by jutting fortifications and flanked by wide bastions topped by towers. Each gateway had two or three adjoining entrances spanned by an arch and supported by piers covered with plaques of limestone and of basalt.

From these gateways radiated the streets which divided the lower city into quarters where the private dwellings were built. Around the acropolis (whose slopes must have been terraced) stood the administrative and religious buildings.

Each temple was dedicated to a different divinity and in most cases consisted of a single central hall whose massive towering walls dominated the city's single storey dwellings made of sun-dried brick.

On the acropolis stood the royal palace. It was unearthed in a badly damaged state, owing to repeated sackings over the centuries and to the fact that its stones, perfectly squared and smoothed, had been used for the construction of later buildings.

Near to the palace stood the Great Temple which, unlike the smaller temples, had a series of rooms: a long chamber ending in a deep niche for the worship of the god, a small ante-chamber and an open frontal vestibule at the opposite end, approached by a short staircase.

A decisive discovery made during the 1968 excavations finally revealed the name of the city as Ebla. A statue found in one of the temples bore an Akkadian cuneiform inscription on its torso with the name of a prince, Ibbit-Lim, son of a king, Igrish-Khep, who proclaimed himself lord of Ebla. The statue dated from about 2000 B.C.

Ebla had been mentioned in earlier Sumerian and Akkadian inscriptions of the 3rd millennium B.C. as a powerful city that submitted to the great Sargon of Akkad around 2340-2300 B.C. and subsequently fell into the hands of this monarch's grandson, Naram-Sin of Akkad, between 2250 and 2225 B.C. Later the city regained its independence and between 2120 and 2000 B.C. rose again to major importance.

After 2000 B.C., few texts mentioned Ebla, although according to one text there was a king of Ebla around 1700 B.C. After 1600 B.C. the city had probably become a heap of ruins. That is what it must have seemed around 1500 B.C. to the great Pharaoh Thutmoses III, who recorded on a monument at Karnak that Ebla was one of the places through which the Egyptian army passed on its victorious march to the Euphrates.

After this Ebla became a forgotten city. The Italian excavations revealed, however, that during the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., a small Aramaic fortification stood on the acropolis of Ebla. One or two centuries later, in the Achaemenid period, there was a modest village there.

Then even these traces of settlement disappeared from Tell Mardikh. The mound was completely abandoned and its surface became ploughed land. Only for a short while—perhaps just one season—was the acropolis used as a military camp site, possibly in the campaigns that devastated the region during the Crusades.

The picture of Ebla, as reconstituted by the excavations of the Italian Mission, makes a major contribution to the history of ancient Syria. Ebla is seen to have been a leading political centre of northern Syria between 2000 B.C. and 1850 to 1700 B.C. After the later date the city must have become a vassal of Aleppo, one of the leading states at the time of Hammurabi of Babylon.

The Italian archaeologists estimate that at its most flourishing period Ebla had between 20,000 and 30,000 inhabitants (an extremely large population for that time).

Ebla remained a vassal of Aleppo until about 1600 B.C., when it must certainly have fallen to the Hittite invaders who under Khattushili I and Murshili I overcame first Aleppo and then Babylon.

Our discovery of Ebla as it was at its zenith, and in particular the discovery of artistic and architectural features of the period between 2000 B.C. and 1700 B.C., give an entirely new historical valuation to Syria, greater than the one usually accepted in historiography.

Syria, a land with an ethnically diverse population, often subjected to outside domination and varied cultural influences, had hitherto seemed to be a meeting ground for other peoples rather than the centre of an autonomous cultural development.

The systematic exploration of Ebla as it existed from 2000 to 1600 B.C. during the Amorite dynasties has produced evidence to refute the traditional interpretation. For the period of the Amorite dynasties, or more correctly the paleo-Syrian period, saw the formation of a specifically Syrian culture, with an urban organization, architecture and artistic vision of striking originality.

Moreover, the most fruitful aspects of this paleo-Syrian culture are to be found in other centres of Northern Syria even as late as the first millennium B.C. They testify very clearly to the continuity of the tradition, showing that the originality of Ebla was no mere transitory process.

However, the very originality of the paleo-Syrian culture shown at Tell-Mardikh raised the problem of the historical roots of this culture, and it was on this question that the Italian Archaeological Museum focussed its research from 1973.

Its studies were concentrated on the remains of Ebla dating from the third millennium B.C. to find evidence of the city destroyed by Sargon and by Naram-Sin of Akkad. Ebla was mentioned by Gudea, governor of the Sumerian city of Lagash, as a source of timber, and documents of the great kings of the third dynasty of Ur describe Ebla as a centre producing highly prized textiles.

So in 1973 our mission began the systematic exploration of the western slope of Tell Mardikh, hoping to discover traces of an important settlement dating from the third millennium B.C.

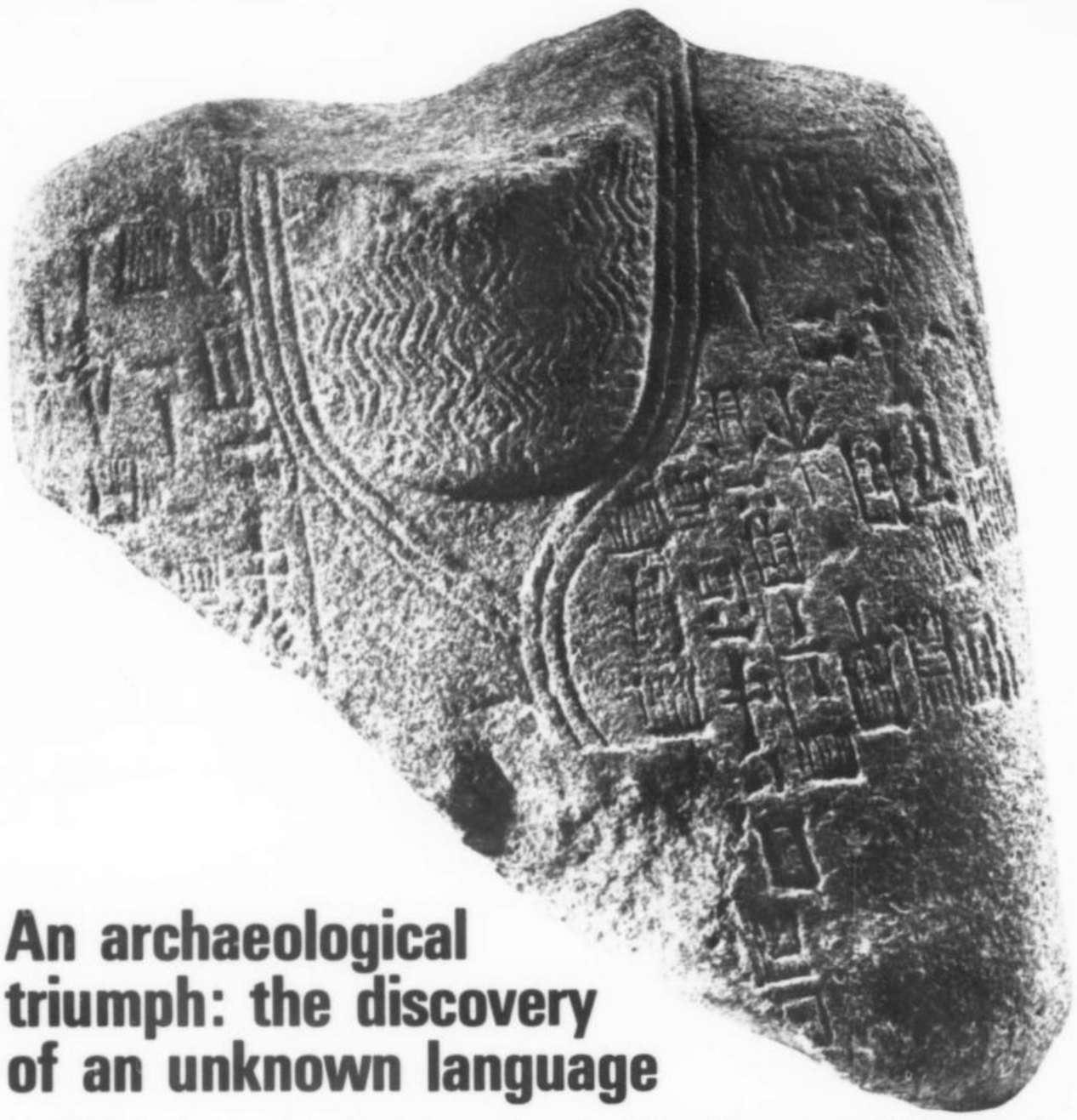
After three years of excavation, we have brought to light part of the royal palace whose period of greatest splendour must have been between 2400 and 2250 B.C. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence indicate that this was indeed the palace destroyed by Naram-Sin of Akkad in 2225 B.C.

The section of the palace now unearthed has proved to be a striking monumental achievement of proto-Syrian architecture. So far the only part explored is the monumental audience court surrounded by porticoes with tall wooden columns.

On one side of the court lay a raised podium where the king sat during official audiences. On ano-

Photos © Paolo Matthiae, Italy.

Excavation of the remains of the city of Ebla, at Tell Mardikh near Aleppo, has revealed striking monumental architecture of ancient Syria. Opposite page, ruins of the "cella" (the sanctuary enshrining the statue of a god) in the great temple which dominated the city in the 19th and 18th centuries B. C. Sturdy walls of sun-dried brick (left) are vestiges of single-storey houses in a residential quarter of the lower city. They date from the period (1700-1650 B. C.) when Ebla was a wealthy settlement of some 30,000 inhabitants. Wooden figurine above came to light in Ebla's royal palace. The statuette (20 cm high), which may depict a king of Ebla, is in a remarkable state of preservation although carved some 4,300 years ago.



An archaeological triumph: the discovery of an unknown language

In 1968 Italian archaeologists made a decisive discovery which proved that the mound of Tell Mardikh hid the vanished city of Ebla, a major commercial centre of Antiquity whose location was completely unknown. They unearthed the broken torso of a 2000 B.C. basalt statue (above) which bore among its cuneiform inscriptions in the Akkadian language the word "Ebla". A few years later came one of the most amazing archaeological finds of modern times, the discovery of thousands of baked clay tablets (right) on which the royal archives of Ebla were inscribed. Many of the tablets, dating from 2350 to 2250 B.C. had survived intact (below). They were scratched with notches in cuneiform writing in a hitherto unknown language, since renamed Eblaite. Scholars are now deciphering the Eblaite inscriptions, since in addition to accounts, inventories and price-lists the texts contain some equivalent expressions in Eblaite and Sumerian, a Near Eastern language of Antiquity.

Photos © Paolo Matthiae, Italy

ther was a great doorway giving access to the palace. Of the palace itself only two rooms have so far been excavated, plus a great ceremonial staircase with four ramps. The steps were decorated with jewelled incrustations now lost. Apart from this a few smaller spaces have been cleared, including some used as small storerooms.

With walls sometimes reaching 2.80 metres thick, the structure has a very impressive appearance. This and the refinement of certain building details express an original architectural concept, some of whose characteristics were handed down and later influenced the Aramaic palaces of northern Syria of the first millennium B.C.

But the most astounding find at Ebla is undoubtedly that of the palace archives, inscribed with cuneiform writings on clay tablets. The tablets were arranged in two small closed rooms, in corners of the court of audience. The smaller room contained a collection of about 1,000 clay tablets or fragments of tablets. In the bigger room we discovered about 15,000 tablets or fragments of tablets.

These two sets of archives escaped destruction by Naram-Sin's soldiers because they were not considered of any value. The smaller collection (about 1,000 tablets) was strewn in heaps between the ruins of the collapsed ceiling and of the masonry.

In the larger collection, the thousands of tablets must have been stored on wooden shelves running along the walls and held by vertical wooden poles fixed to the floor. The tablets were found piled up still more or less in order on the floor where they had fallen when the shelving burned.

The cuneiform tablets are written in Sumerian and in the Eblaite tongue, a Semitic language that shows strong resemblances—though it is older by more than a thousand years—to the Semitic languages of the "Canaanite" group of the first millennium B.C., and especially to Phoenician.

Professor Giovanni Pettinato, the epigraphist of the Italian Mission and professor of Assyriology of the University of Rome, has studied the Eblaite tongue in the Tell Mardikh texts. He had already succeeded in identifying a Semitic language, which he defined as "Paleo-Canaanite", by studying the few tablets already

discovered in one of the rooms of the palace in 1974 before the great collection of archives was brought to light.

An examination of the huge mass of texts discovered in the palace in September and October 1975 has fully confirmed his interpretation. The Eblaite texts of the royal archives of Ebla thus represent extraordinarily rich documentation that will advance the deciphering of the texts and the reconstruction of this language, along with the study of Semitic languages in general.

The majority of the Eblan texts are bookkeeping statements concerning an international trade in textiles and metals. Ebla was famous for both these items of merchandise in the Mesopotamian world of that time. The palace itself kept the files on what we would call registers of consignments.

An interesting detail is that the texts mention, among the various qualities of cloth, some which were "lined with gold". These must have been high quality textiles which even today are known as "damask" (from the Syrian city of Damascus where they were first produced.).

The tablets provide detailed information on trade in the Near East in the third millennium B.C. and also much data on the historical geography of that period. They name many cities to which goods were sent. They show that this trade had very wide horizons, because it extended from the Mediterranean coast to the east of Mesopotamia, and from Anatolia to Palestine.

The archives also contain many texts made up of lists of Sumerian words and phrases, and of bilingual vocabularies with indications of the Sumerian pronunciation.

In addition to giving linguistic information of the greatest importance, the tablets also provide valuable information on the organization of education at that time. They show that all instruction was strictly controlled by the state, (as in Mesopotamia during the same period) and was designed to train students to become state administrators. The archives contain school exercises written by students whose names appear in later official documents as leading civil servants.

The archives also contain administrative, legal and diplomatic documents. Some deal with budgetary aspects of the administration and throw light on the internal organization of the state, at the "ministerial level", on the organization and government of the provinces and on the financial structures of the state, including the collection of taxes.

There are also facts on the population of Ebla, on administrative and juridical problems, such as questions of inheritance or the dividing up of booty. Diplomatic documents include three international treaties, one of them being a pact between Ebla and Assur, of particular interest because of the complexity of its clauses and the political relationships it reveals.

A certain number of literary texts are of exceptional value. One seems to be an Eblaite version of a passage from the Mesopotamian saga of Gilgamesh, the great Assyrian hero who according to legend was king of Uruk.

Other literary texts include myths, hymns and exorcist spells and are most probably translations into the Eblaite tongue of Sumerian works whose originals have previously reached us only in relatively late Mesopotamian versions, written down about 1800 B.C. when Sumerian was no longer a spoken language.

From this rich harvest, one more example can well illustrate the revolutionary character of the discoveries. The texts tell us about a complete dynasty of at least five kings of Ebla who appear to be contemporaries of the kings of Akkad, from Sargon to Naram-Sin.

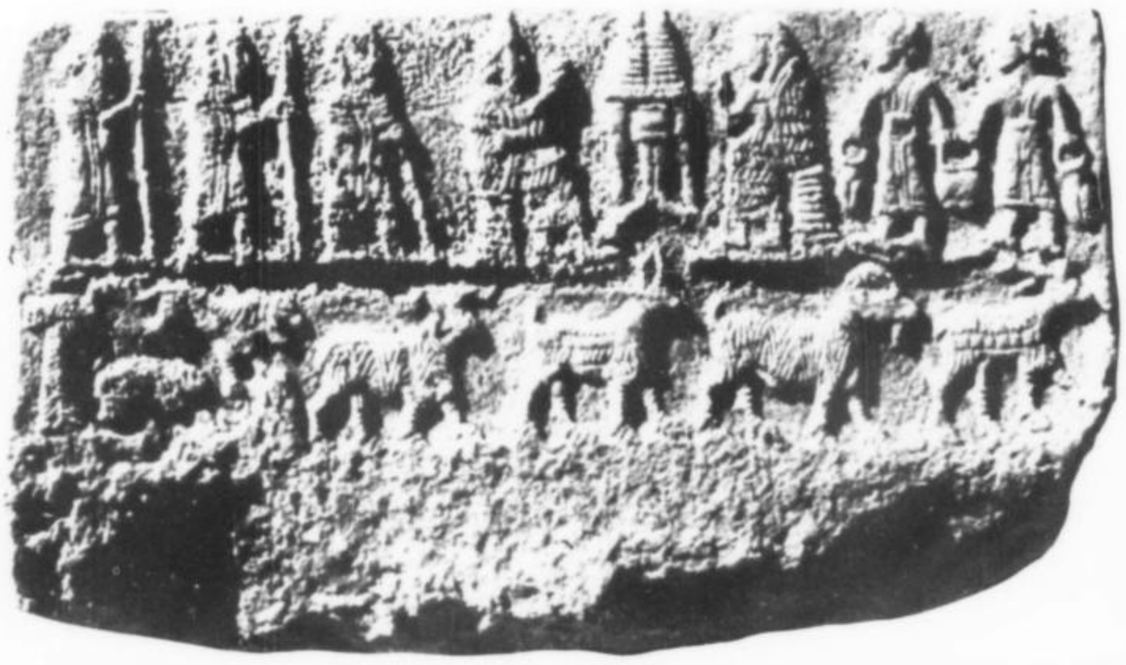
This Eblan dynasty, of which written tradition had lost the record, appears to have dominated the Near East from Northern Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean, and to have been inspired by a universalist ideology.

It is now almost certain that in order to express the Eblaite language in writing, the royal chancery of Ebla successfully undertook the complex adaptation of the cuneiform syllabic script (invented in Mesopotamia to write Sumerian).

With the findings at Ebla, Syria has rediscovered one of the most brilliant pages of its long history, and thus takes its place alongside Mesopotamia and Egypt in the early progress of mankind towards civilization.

■ **Paolo Matthiae**

TEMPLE TREASURES. **Until the discovery of Ebla, nothing was known of Syrian art before 1750 B.C. Excavation of the Ebla temples has revealed striking decorative stone sculpture of earlier times including several lustral bowls, the oldest of which date back to 2000 B.C. (see page 7). Below, two lustral bowls (carved about 1900 B.C.) incorporating the two-tier decoration characteristic of early Syrian art. Friezes at right depict (top) a ritual banquet with the king and queen attended by a retinue of servants, and (bottom) a string of goats. Left, mythological scene featuring a fabulous animal surmounts a realistic portrayal of a hunter in pursuit of a lion attacking a bull.**



Photos © Paolo Matthiae, Italy

Photo © Erik Olsen, Denmark

This 19th-century portrayal of St. George slaying the dragon forms part of an ensemble of 18th- and 19th- century paintings in the sanctuary of Ura Kidané Mehret church on the island of Zeghie, in Lake Tana (Ethiopia). The church's walls are covered with a vast profusion of paintings depicting some 3,000 biblical figures.

THE PAINTED CHURCHES OF LAKE TANA

Cavalcade of mural art on Ethiopia's monastery islands

by Berhanou Abbebe

ETHIOPIA, the birthplace of diverse ancient cultures, has had a continuous existence as a nation for no less than 2,000 years, but many aspects of its cultural past are still obscure. Even quite recently, Ethiopia's abundant cultural and artistic achievements since the beginning of the Christian Era were a closed book to all but a few specialists.

CONTINUED PAGE 16

BERHANOU ABBEBE *is responsible for the preservation and restoration of Ethiopia's historic sites and monuments as head of the Ethiopian government's Organization for Research and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage, which is attached to the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth (Addis Ababa).*

Slaughter of the innocents

The church of Rema Medhani Alem, on the now-uninhabited island of Rema, is traditionally thought to have been founded by a monk, the brother of a king of Ethiopia. On the walls of the "maqdas", the square sanctuary characteristic of Lake Tana's churches, an unbroken expanse of paintings narrate the life of the Virgin Mary, as well as depicting saints, martyrs and a dream which revealed to Herod, slaughterer of the innocents, his own true nature (left). The dream (enlarged detail at right) is a symbolic representation of Herod as a serpent, symbol of evil, crushing a mass of human beings in its coils. The pictures are executed in the traditional colours of Ethiopian painting: yellow, red, green and black.

Photos © Erik Olsen, Denmark

Crowning of the Virgin

Another image from the sanctuary of Rema Medhani Alem depicts the coronation of the Virgin Mary. The two figures in the lower frieze, seeming to float weightlessly in the air, curiously accentuate the serene harmony of the composition above.

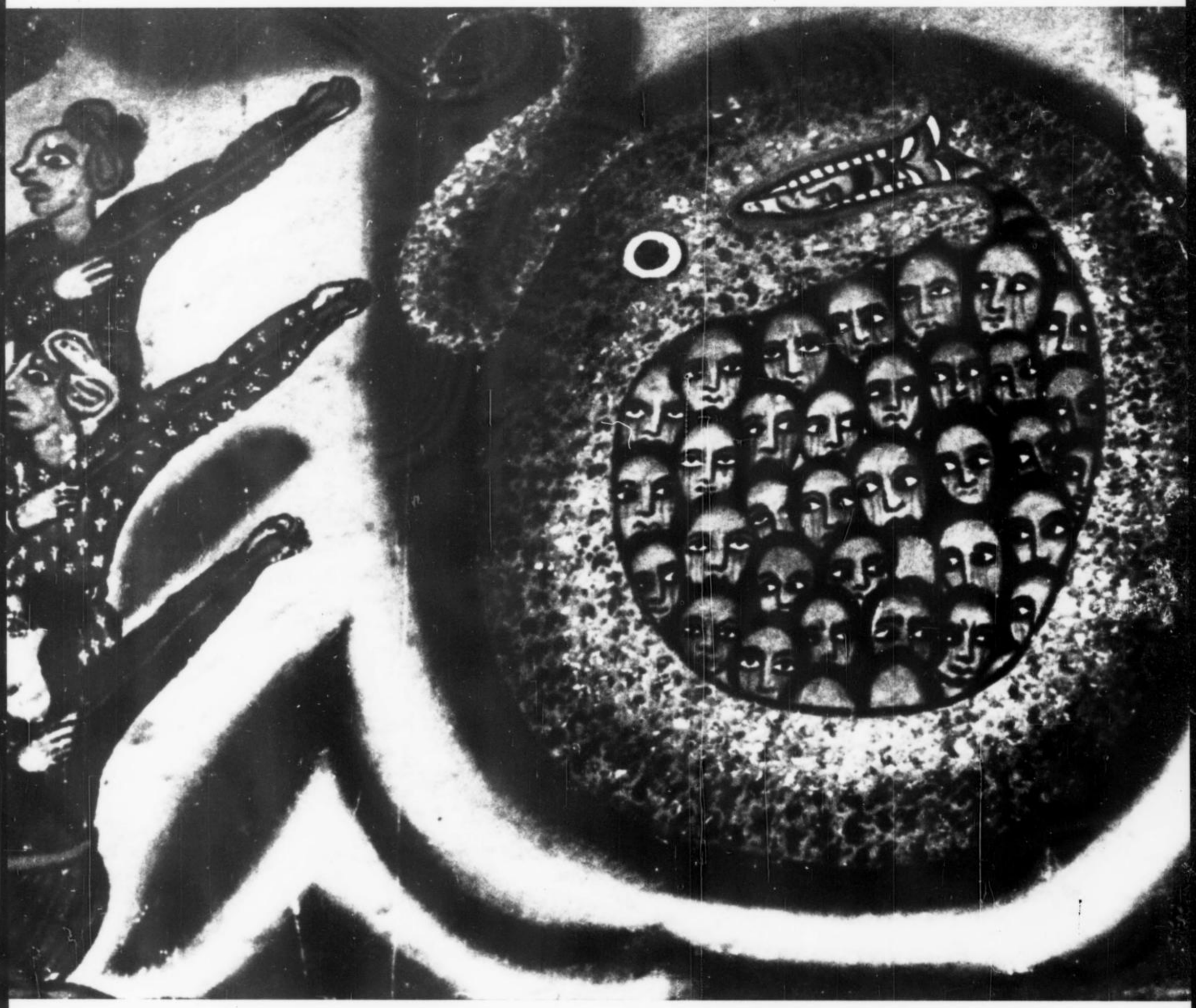


Photo C. Almasy, Paris

Texts in a sacred language

Illuminated manuscripts from the 14th and 15th centuries have been discovered in the monasteries of Lake Tana. Many of these outstandingly beautiful works are preserved in two important libraries, one on Kebran island, the other on Tana Quircos, which today contains some 50 manuscripts. Left, an Ethiopian priest reads one of the precious manuscripts written in Ge'ez, the sacred language of Ethiopia.

After the Second World War the art and monuments of this immense country, situated like a wedge on the eastern flank of Africa, increasingly aroused the curiosity of a growing number of visitors. However, much of its age-old heritage of architecture and paintings had seriously deteriorated and the task of preserving it was all the more difficult since these cultural treasures were scattered over a vast area. About ten years ago the Ethiopian government asked Unesco for help in saving these precious works of art.

In 1968 the Ethiopian government and Unesco began to work out a programme of preservation and restoration of sites and monuments along the "Historic Route". This runs through Axum (capital of ancient Abyssinia at the beginning of the Christian era) to the holy city of Lalibella with its 13th-century monolithic churches hewn from the natural rock, and the city of Gondar, founded in the 17th century when it became Ethiopia's capital, finally reaching the falls of the Blue Nile and Lake Tana.

The "Historic Route" thus in itself offers a voyage of cultural discovery through Ethiopia, a country which was a great African empire before the Christian era and where in the 4th century Christianity brought an element of unity to peoples of different ethnic origin and cultures. Over the centuries Ethiopia was exposed to a wide range of influences, through its contacts with southern Arabia, Byzantium and Coptic Egypt, monastic Syria, Armenia and Jerusalem, medieval and Renaissance Europe and eastern Asia, particularly India.

And yet a totally original art flowered in Ethiopia, finding expression in both painting and architecture, the most outstanding examples of which are the churches and monasteries of Lake Tana.

Lake Tana, Ethiopia's biggest lake, through which flow the waters of the Upper Blue Nile, is located in the west of the rugged Ethiopian highlands, over 1,800 m. above sea level. The heart-shaped lake (some 80 km long and almost as wide) is dotted with 38 islands some of which were for centuries important centres of art and culture.

The churches of Lake Tana are circular in form, with a square sanctuary in the centre. They have doors corresponding to the cardinal points of the compass and conical roofs covered with thatch. Their walls are covered with paintings stretching over dozens of square metres. In the 18th-century monastery of Narga Selassié paintings embellish an area of no less than 350 square metres.

The ornamental paintings of Lake Tana, none of them older than the 17th century, have a style, in terms of composition and colours, that is quite unique. Their subjects are the traditional images of Christian iconography, depicting Christ, the Virgin Mary, the saints, the apostles, the archangels and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Their vivid hues, geometric forms and haloed faces with wide staring eyes have an obvious affinity with the 14th- and 15th-century illuminated manuscripts in the same Lake Tana monasteries, to which Unesco devoted an outstanding album of colour reproductions in 1961 (1).

No less than 3,000 figures from the scriptures are depicted in one church on the island of Zeghie. But many churches of this period contain, in addition to such vast compositions, smaller pictures in some cases no bigger than playing cards, but executed with the same wealth of artistic virtuosity.

Many of these art treasures are today in urgent need of restoration. Water seeps through dilapidated thatch roofs. The paintings are fading and in some cases virtually hanging in rags. In some churches pigeons are destroying paintings by pecking to pieces the mud and dung plaster on which they are mounted. A systematic inventory of Ethiopian works of art has still to be completed. Theft and vandalism are rife in abandoned churches and monasteries where for two centuries monks created the outstanding compositions which make the islands of Lake

(1). **Ethiopia: Illuminated Manuscripts,** *published by the New York Graphic Society by arrangement with Unesco, 1961. Introduction by Jules Leroy; texts by Stephen Wright and Otto A. Jäger.*

Photos © Almasy, Paris

Thirty-eight islands dot Lake Tana, Ethiopia's biggest lake, over 1,800 metres high in a rugged mountain massif. Opposite page, Mandaba island, whose monastery church, (left) a circular building with a thatched roof is characteristic of the sacred monuments on the islands. Below, painting from the church of the Archangel Gabriel on Kebran island, famed for its collection of illuminated manuscripts. Bottom, saint on horseback from Ura Kidané Mehret on Zeghie island may be a variant of the St. George shown on page 13.

Photo © Luc Joubert, Paris

Tana one of the wonders of Ethiopia.

Churches and pictures alike must be restored. Work is being carried out by the Ethiopian government through its Organization for Research and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage. This body, which is attached to the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, is training young Ethiopian specialists in restoration.

Unesco is providing technical assistance and the International Centre for the Study of the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, based in Rome, is collaborating on the restoration of the paintings. This rescue operation will save the heritage of centuries of monastic art in Ethiopia.

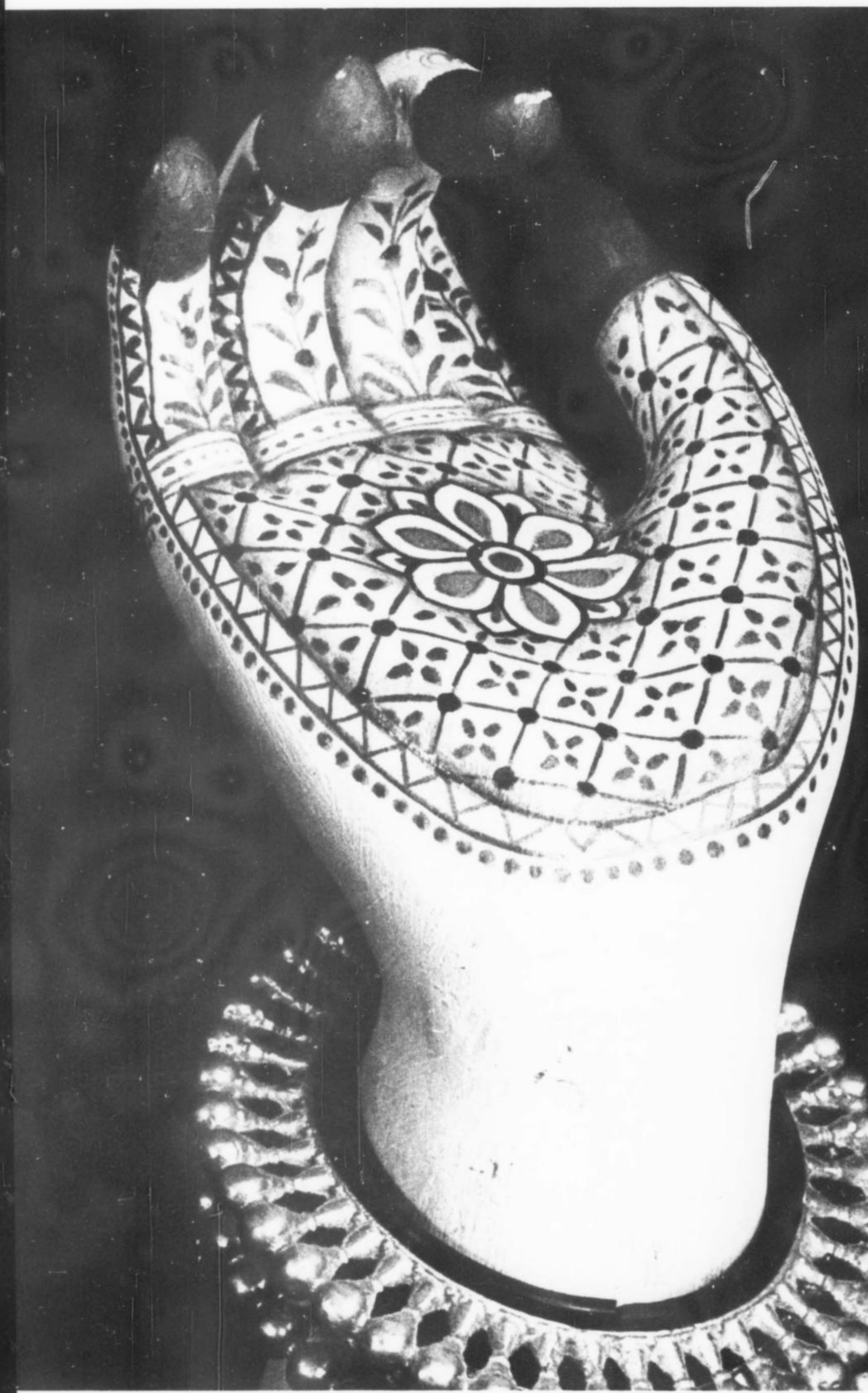
■ **Berhanou Abbebe**

Photo © Erik Olsen, Denmark

HENN

India's "mehr

by
Jogendra Saksena



JOGENDRA SAKSENA, *Indian writer and artist, is a staff member of the information services of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, in New Delhi.*

Photos courtesy Dept. of Archaeology, Rajasthan, Jaipur, India

Intricate geometric and floral designs on the plaster foot and hand seen here are typical examples of the art of mehndi (henna) painting, a form of body decoration that holds an important place in Indian art and culture. Powder from ground henna leaves is made into a coloured paste which women, particularly those of the Vaishya community in Rajasthan, use to paint symbolic designs on their hands and feet.

A FOR HAPPINESS

ndi" art of symbols for all seasons

IN India, religious beliefs often inspire traditional folk arts. In Rajasthan State, southwest of Delhi where the famed Rajput forts and palaces dot the fertile plains, the art of Mehndi or hand painting for women is integrated with the region's festivals and ceremonial occasions.

For centuries, women in India and the Middle East have used mehndi or henna for decoration, but the women of the Vaishya community in Rajasthan are noted for using it to cover their palms, fingers and feet with artistic designs. These decorations vary according to the occasion, whether it is a marriage, childbirth, or festivals such as *Holi* and *Gangour.*

Mehndi or henna is widely cultivated in Africa and southwest Asia as an ornamental and dye plant. Its uses include dyeing hair and sometimes animals and hides. It is also used as an astringent against skin diseases, burns and bruises.

From Biblical times, Egyptian and Indian women dyed their fingernails and parts of their hands and feet an orange red colour with henna paste in order to enhance their beauty. The colour would last three or four weeks.

Mehndi art holds an important place in Indian art and culture and is described among the *Solah Sringar* (sixteen adornments of a woman). Maharisi Vatsyayan also included mehndi as one of his 64 arts for women, which include painting the teeth, dyeing cloth and staining the body with sandal wood, saffron and myrtle.

It was believed that mehndi painting came to India with the Muslims, but it actually began long before the Gupta period (350 A. D.). The ancient Ajanta-Ellora cave murals depict scenes relating to mehndi decoration. In one mural, a princess of Pataliputra reclines half-asleep under a tree while her girlfriends busily paint her hands and feet with mehndi designs.

But the use of mehndi became common at the beginning of the Mogul period during Muslim raids on villages to kidnap young virgins. The raiders would also often take young married women. In order to distinguish themselves from unmarried women, married women used mehndi because it faded much more slowly than the tumeric or saffron with which they were usually anointed.

Today this body adornment has evolved into intricate geometric and floral designs, which still flourish as an essential decoration that has become lost and forgotten in other countries.

Mehndi in the form of henna leaves is ground into a powder and mixed with lemon juice, candy water and a few drops of kerosene to produce a paste of deep, long lasting colour. Hands and feet are washed well with *besan* (gram flour) or soap.

A matchstick or thin wire or even just an index finger is used to apply the beautiful patterns. The paste is put on in the form of a thin thread without allowing the applicator to touch the skin. When the design is completed, it is left to dry and stain the palm.

Etching lime paste on the red mehndi produces the "batik" method, or white designs on red background. To maintain the deep red colour, sesame or mustard oil is rubbed on the hands and then washed off with water. The designs can last two or three weeks. Although ready-made designs also exist and can be applied quickly, they fade much more rapidly. Both time and devotion are required for the task involved in applying these designs (four to eight hours in the case of brides).

Mehndi is a symbol of good luck in married life. It is believed that the deeper the red colour of mehndi on a woman's palms, the more her husband loves her. As a symbol of lasting love between husband and wife, only married women are permitted to practice the art of mehndi and women consider it a sign of wifehood.

Unmarried women and widows are not allowed to wear mehndi designs, although dead women are decorated like brides with mehndi. Unmarried girls and boys are not allowed to stain their feet with mehndi as it is a bad omen. A pregnant woman cannot use mehndi.

It is believed that *Lakshmi,* the goddess of luck and happiness, dwells in mehndi designs. If a dot of mehndi stains the forehead of a man or woman, it is considered to be a sign of luck. Mehndi is also a symbol of good luck offered to gods and goddesses to appease them and request favours and to ward off evil spirits. Thus religious, luck-seeking women all over India love to wear mehndi.

Mehndi on a bride's hands and feet

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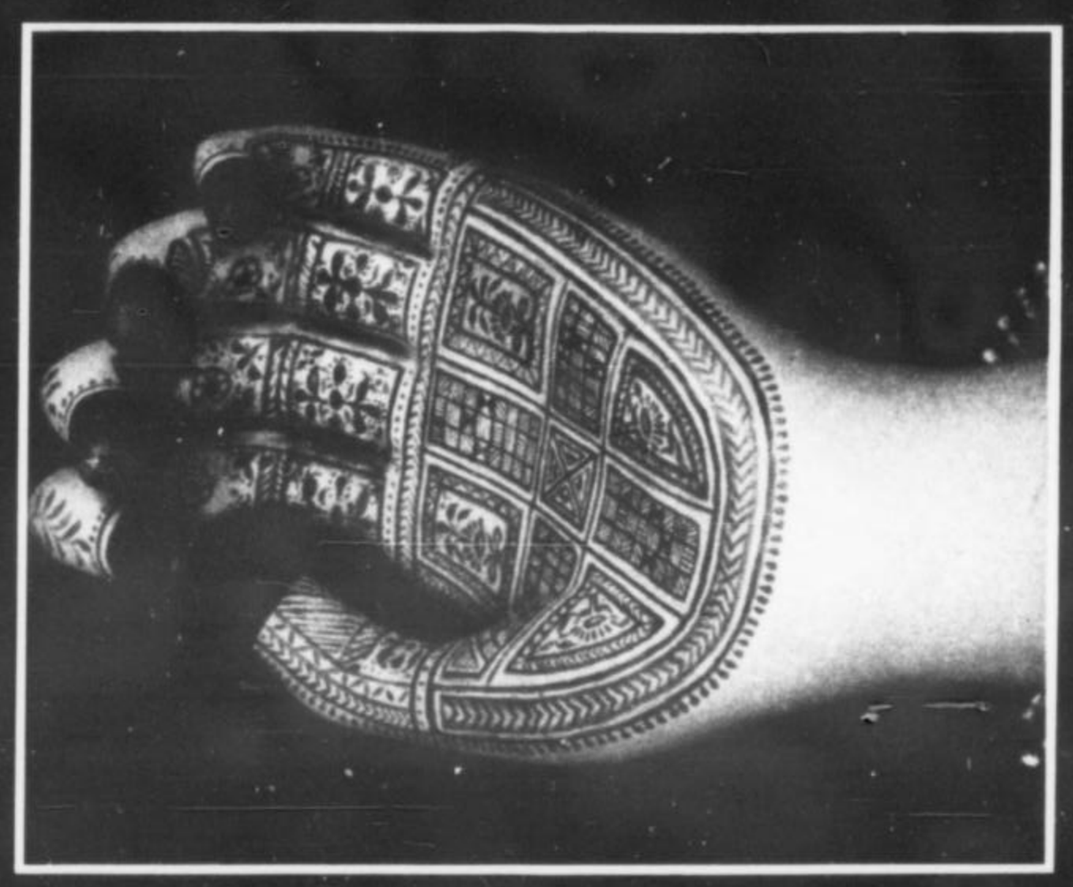

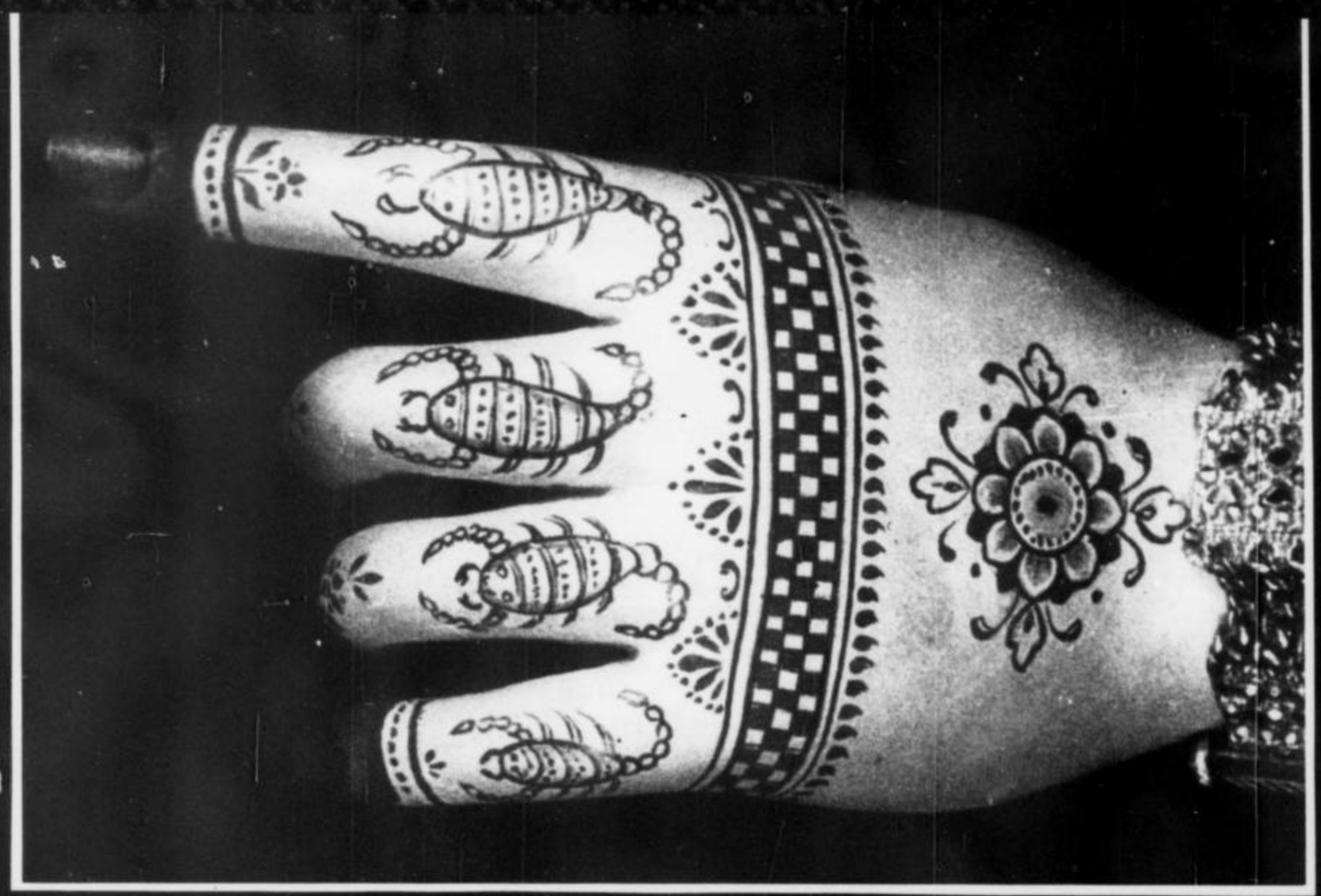

Photos courtesy
Dept. of Archaeology,
Rajasthan, Jaipur

Photo © Jogendra Saksena, New Delhi

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Drawing © Jogendra Saksena, New Delhi

MEHNDI'S MANY MEANINGS. Mehndi designs like the one being applied with artistic skill (above) are used to mark numerous occasions and events, including the seasons, festivals and ceremonies, and they are especially linked with marriage and happiness in married life. Motifs in the mehndi paintings on these pages include flowers (for happiness), scorpions (symbol of love), and sweetmeats (long married life). The art of mehndi has also evolved with the times. In "old mehndi" style (right) designs are drawn within a square or rectangle covering the whole of the palm. "New mehndi" design (above right) is done within a circle leaving enough space around the central motif to highlight its beauty.

are essential decorations for a marriage ceremony. Another Hindu custom named *hathleva* where the bride and groom in front of the sacred fire, hold each other's hand in which a ball of mehndi has been placed, also symbolizes their union. Their palms both become stained and it is believed that the deeper the tint of mehndi, the happier their married life will be.

Arranged marriages where the bride and groom first meet at the marriage ceremony are still common in India. The philosophy that love germinates with the consummation of marriage and grows with time is expressed in a folk song in which mehndi plays an integral part:

Bana (the groom), you are rich in colour like mehndi,
I keep you in my closed fist.
Bana, you are beautiful like collyrium,
I keep you hidden in my eyelids.
Bana, you are beautiful like the sun,
I keep you in my flower vase.
Bana, you are lustrous like a pearl,
I keep you threaded in my nose-ring.
Bana, you are rich in colour like mehndi,
I wear you lovingly in my beautiful palm.

In another sentimental Rajasthani folk song, a man remarks on the beautiful mehndi coloured palms of his beloved:

The love juice of mehndi is a lovely tint,
Put thy hand on my heart;
The love juice of mehndi is a lovely tint.
I make an offering of rubies and jewels;
The love juice of mehndi is a lovely tint.

Mehndi designs can be classified according to the following divisions: seasons, festivals, ceremonies and miscellaneous. Miscellaneous designs supplement the specific and rather limited designs for festivals and ceremonies. Many local folk customs and beliefs are represented in these designs.

Bicchu, the scorpion, is a symbol of love and a popular design, especially in the summer. The parrot is also an important symbol in Rajasthani folk songs as the heroine's messenger. The peacock, noted for its beauty and multicoloured appearance, is the beloved companion of wives who have been separated from their husbands. Other daily objects depicted are sweetmeats, clothes, flowers and objects used in games, such as *chakaris* (a whirling toy like a pulley).

Keri (unripe mango) and water chestnuts are also often drawn, as well as lotuses. Designs with the sun, moon, stars and *keri* represent perfect, continuous married life. Flowers symbolize happiness, unripe mangoes signify virginity and the coming of summer, and the peacock, parrot and scorpion symbolize love.

Indian seasons are summer, rains and winter. The summer and rainy seasons last from the *Holi* to the *Deepavali* festivals, or from March to October. Mehndi is suitable for the summer because it produces a cool, soothing effect on the hands and has medicinal properties which are also appreciated during the rainy season. Hundreds of varieties of *bijanis* (fans) are a popular and appropriate motif for summer as they symbolize air and relief from heat.

During the rainy season, the designs are more abundant, elaborate and exuberant than during the summer and even more so than in the winter. Mehndi designs reach their height of beauty and magnificence during this time. They include *keri* and *chopar,* which is a game resembling backgammon. *Laharia,* which is an ocean wave or river's ripple, represents surging human emotions of joy and excitement and reflects the prevailing mood of the season. It is also the season of *mela* or fairs, festivals and swings when women spend their time holidaying and swinging in the garden. The emotions expressed in brilliant garments with both rainbow colours and *laharia* and *keri* motifs have been transferred to mehndi designs. *Ghevar*, a variety of sweetmeat presented to sisters by brothers during a festival, provides the inspiration for another common mehndi design.

Winter is the least auspicious season for mehndi due to its cooling effect and therefore there are fewer designs.

SPECIFIC designs are used for certain festivals such as *Kajjali Tija, Holi* and *Gangour.* Many ceremonies and festivals are meant for the well-being of male members of a household. But the *Tija* festival honours married women who decorate their palms with house designs to wish for increased material wealth for their husbands.

Holi, one of the most colourful festivals in India, honours the important historic period of Vedic religious feuds. During this time, women draw two of the oldest musical instruments on their palms. These are used only for songs relating to this festival.

Gangour, a marriage festival, is one of the most significant for mehndi. On the last day, unmarried girls hoping to find a suitable husband put 32 marks of mehndi on the wall. Married women hope for an eternal married life by drawing designs of various sweetmeats.

Mehndi designs are only loosely classified according to various ceremonial occasions such as first pregnancy and *suraj* (childbirth). However, in marriage ceremonies, *kalasha* (pitcher) and the swastika are significant symbols on the bride's hands. The pitcher is significant in all religious ceremonies while the swastika symbolizes the well-being of the future. The bride's hands are also decorated with mehndi on the occasion of her leaving her mother's house for that of her mother-in-law and vice versa.

MEHNDI designs are never static but change with time. Just as new ideas keep folk songs and tales up to date, so are new lines added to the mehndi art.

In "old mehndi," the designs are drawn within a square or rectangle and the whole palm is covered from the wrist to the fingertips so that there are few bare surfaces. In "new mehndi," the designs are done within concentric circles and cover only the centre of the palm with empty spaces scantily covered with small motifs.

"Old mehndi" tends to crowd the least available space with heavy motifs, but "new mehndi" leaves enough space around the central motif to highlight its beauty, a trend which follows modern painting. Now the trend is for floral designs.

Mehndi customs also prevail in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, Kashmir and Haryana which borders Rajasthan. These states have their own folk songs which express mehndi's importance in daily life. Mehndi also became part of Muslim tradition when thousands of Hindus converted to Islam during the Mogul period and took their customs, including mehndi, with them. Muslims call it Muharram but the variety of their designs is not as great as those of Hindu women.

Mehndi has been deeply woven into the fabric of folk life and has infiltrated proverbs. The "mehndi stained hand" proverb refers to those who shirk their work. It is also said that "mehndi only gives colour when it is ground on stone with a pestle," meaning that only when a person undergoes hardship can he or she gain some experience from life.

Mehndi presents a true picture of folk life and a window on the folk way of thinking. Two meaningful lines by an Urdu poet express the beauty, romance and richness of the mehndi tradition:

"Now I have decided to write my heart's desire on mehndi leaves. So when she comes to pluck mehndi leaves, she may lay her hand upon them and read my secret message."

■ **Jogendra Saksena**

Photo © Jesper Kirknaes, Copenhagen.

Adults learn to read in an open-air literacy class near Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).

AFTER LITERACY, WHAT NEXT?

Tanzania records its heritage of folk tales in reading books for the newly literate

by Simoni Malya

ILLITERACY is a form of oppression to the extent that it has narrowed the scope of so many of our adults and has inhibited them from participating fully in solving problems and making decisions that affect their day-to-day existence.

The oppressive nature of illiteracy in the United Republic of Tanzania and the seriousness of its impact on our people can be seen quite vividly. It is estimated that there are over 13 million Tanzanians of whom 7 million are adults and 6 million are under 15 years of age. Over 80 per cent of the adults cannot read or write.

This data has been drawn from a census conducted in 1967 in the United Republic of Tanzania (mainland). As a result of a literacy campaign embarked on after the census, the rate of illiteracy has definitely dropped but exact figures are not yet available.

These are the people who form the productive sector of our population. In order for them to participate in development and change they must, in the first place, be conscious of the need to develop and change. We are not saying that people cannot bring about development and change merely because they are unable to read and write. We are saying, rather, that literacy is a useful tool and that it may quicken the pace of both these processes.

It is further estimated that out of Tanzania's 6 million young people about 3 million are of school age. Yet half of these do not go to school at all, either because no schools are available near their homes or because of a general apathy towards schooling. This means that in addition to the illiterate adult population there are some 1.5 million youngsters in danger of growing up without learning to read and write.

It is estimated, moreover, that well over 90 per cent of Tanzanians live in rural areas where the rate of illiteracy compared to that of the urban areas is overwhelming. The efforts of the adult educator to create a favourable environment for literacy therefore must be focused largely on the rural areas.

SIMONI MALYA, *Tanzanian educator, is senior resident tutor at the Institute of Adult Education, Dar es Salaam. He is the author of several books in Kiswahili on the development of reading materials for the newly literate and the creation of conditions enabling them to retain their knowledge. A longer version of this article originally appeared in Unesco's international educational quarterly* Prospects *(Vol. VI, No. 1, 1976).*

Tanzania has launched a far-reaching literacy campaign to teach reading and writing in the rural areas where 90 per cent of the country's population lives today. Right, market day in Lushoto, a rural community some 300 km north-west of Dar es Salaam. Opposite page, village woman of the Uluguru mountains, 200 km west of the capital.

Furthermore, the lack of follow-up reading materials means that each year over 60 per cent of those adults who once knew how to read and write relapse into illiteracy. This poses another grim challenge to the adult educator, and calls for a two-pronged attack in the war against illiteracy.

As adults are being made literate, sound steps must be taken simultaneously to prepare reading materials which will motivate the newly literate to keep on reading and retain their knowledge. There is no single or simple answer to this problem because the number of adults to be attended to is so vast and their tastes for reading materials are inevitably varied.

Finally, while the estimated rate of illiteracy among men is over 80 per cent, among women it is over 90 per cent. There is an urgent need for something specific that will appeal to parents and especially to mothers and housewives so that they may be induced to continue reading after they have become literate. It would be unthinkable to set about promoting development and change without taking account of women, who have such a significant role to play.

From these few facts and figures we can fairly describe our country as a nation of illiterates. And so the problem is how to teach reading and writing meaningfully and, at the same time, prepare the required follow-up reading materials.

In attempting to find at least a partial solution to this problem we turned to materials which originated from adults themselves, influenced by ideas and reactions against the "banking" concept of education in which, in the words of the Brazilian educator and sociologist, Paulo Freire, "the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits."

We imagined that such raw materials as traditional stories could provide a base upon which follow-up reading materials could be produced through the participation and involvement of adults. Such materials are likely to appeal to them more than those produced outside the country. So we chose Tanzanian traditional stories and selected a tentative system consisting of seven easy and distinct steps.

First, we located tribal elders who had earned a reputation as story-tellers and who were willing to share those stories with somebody from outside their tribal grouping.

Then we visited and made friends with them individually. In the communities we visited, story-tellers were accorded the respect that is due to teachers. We introduced ourselves as young teachers who were keen to learn from older teachers and we were made to feel most welcome.

Thirdly, we exchanged views on the significance of traditional stories and the importance of having them recorded permanently. A date was set during which story-tellers from around the village would be invited to contribute and participate in a seminar-workshop on the production of reading materials.

When they came we were faced with the problem of creating an atmosphere that was conducive to story-telling. The elders themselves dictated these conditions.

They decided when they would work, when they would go for a walk, when they would eat, in short the general conduct of the seminar-workshop that would produce reading materials from their stories. The chairman, whom they themselves elected, spoke both their own language and Kiswahili fluently.

In the fifth phase, before taping the stories, we again discussed the importance of having stories and other traditional materials recorded. Emphasis was put on the fact that we do not have sufficient reading materials and that elders were in a position to provide us with such materials. It was also stressed that the materials contained values which would soon disappear if we did not write them down while the teachers were alive.

Then there was a rehearsal before the actual taping. This was meant to enable the elders to recall the stories and be as fluent as possible.

In the seventh and final phase the stories were recorded. When one elder completed a story, it was played back immediately, first, to give an opportunity for correction, and also to amuse all participants, who enjoyed hearing their own voices from the tape recorder.

But before the tapes were stored, the stories had to be translated into Kiswahili—Tanzania's national language—and then printed. Here the chairman of the seminar-workshop also had a crucial role. Every sentence was examined until the chairman was satisfied that its equivalent in Kiswahili had been found.

It was only after checking against the original statements from the tape recorder that sentences were transcribed into Kiswahili. The process of checking and counter-checking went on until a whole story had its

Photos © Jesper Kirknaes, Copenhagen

equivalent in Kiswahili.

Next, manuscripts were turned into the first (rough) typed draft of a booklet. This consisted of typing the manuscripts into the shape, size and pages that the completed booklet would have.

Then, the first typescript was stencilled, and the stencils were numbered and duplicated according to the number of booklets required. In this way the adults' own reading materials were born! Could this be an instance in which the participants had "said their own words and named the world" as Paulo Freire has put it, thereby making a tiny but significant move away from the "culture of silence?"

The problems we ran into in collecting and printing these materials included travelling long distances sometimes in order to get to know only one elder in an entire village who was reputed as a story-teller and who was willing to recount one or more stories he had remembered for so long.

On several occasions it was not easy to convince elders to leave their homes in order to be involved in a seminar or workshop.

Despite the excellent work done by the chairmen of these seminar-workshops and the fact that they could speak fluently both the languages of their fellow-participants and Kiswahili, it was not always easy to find exact translations of the original texts. We were more concerned with the general meanings of sentences and phrases than with individual words.

The elders agreed to give away their "copyright" on these stories for the sake of producing relevant and readable materials and of recording in print a part of our culture which is in danger of vanishing as tribal elders pass on. This is a problem that calls for urgent action.

The problems we encountered are nothing at all compared to the satisfaction we derived from seeing, holding and reading booklets that had been produced by our adults.

Transforming the texts into books is a minor problem, compared to the major ones of gathering the materials and recording them permanently in typescript, manuscript or even tapes.

Nevertheless, in stencilled form, the stories may not be attractive to adults who are used to reading primers with larger print. Then, of course, there is the question of illustrations; our adults prefer books with pictures to those without them.

Nevertheless, the question of publishing books out of the typescripts should be considered secondary to the problem of securing the raw materials. We have already prepared five booklets with a total of 28 stories and 59 proverbs. Already we have distributed over 500 copies within the Mwanza region of Tanzania alone and we have standing orders for over 1,500 copies of the typescripts. So even in typescript form the materials can be very popular.

If we send the typescripts to private publishing firms we run the risk of defeating our purpose. Whereas we are interested in preparing the materials as abundantly and as cheaply as possible, private publishers are interested in maximizing profit. And so, when sufficient typescripts have been secured, we suggest they be handled by non-profit-making national institutions.

The stories produced so far are brief and appeal to people who are not used to reading long texts. They have been written in Kiswahili, a language most adult Tanzanians understand even if they cannot speak it fluently. Through this language a reader interested in finding out something about the culture of Wanyamwezi or Wasukuma can do so by reading these stories even though he cannot speak Kinyamwezi or Kisukuma. The stories have humour which can be appreciated by all those who are familiar with the culture of Tanzania.

Thus far we have discussed the production of these reading materials as a solution to the problem: "After literacy, what next?" But gathering and printing traditional stories is more than a mere exercise in procuring reading materials.

Such materials incorporate the type of education that our forefathers practised. They embody learning and teaching situations which may help us to find better ways of serving

CONTINUED PAGE 27

We publish on this double page two traditional Tanzanian stories told by village elders (left) during a "seminar-workshop". Here, the story-tellers are rehearsing their tales before putting them on tape. These and other folk-tales of Tanzania, hitherto transmitted orally, have now been written down and are used as reading materials for the newly literate.

Photo © Simoni Malya, Dar es Salaam

How the Hippo lost his hair

Drawing © M. P. Papapietro, from *Contes du Zaire* (Tales of Zaire) published by the Conseil International de la Langue Française, Paris 1976.

LONG ago the Hippo used to live on land and not in rivers and lakes like he does today. He used to be a beautiful animal with long, soft hair.

Other animals wished they could have hair as beautiful as the Hippo's. One animal that particularly envied the Hippo was the Giraffe. The Giraffe played a trick which made the Hippo lose all his beautiful hair and become perhaps the most ugly-looking animal known.

This is what happened. The weather became bitterly cold. Every animal was shivering. The Hippo was shivering like the other animals but because he was so huge he appeared to be shivering more than any of them.

The Giraffe was shivering too but when he saw the Hippo he pretended that he was not feeling the cold. He cunningly approached the Hippo and said, "I can see you are shivering badly. What's the matter? Why has this change in the weather affected you more adversely than anyone else?"

"I really don't know why I should shiver so much," replied the Hippo innocently. "In the last few days I thought I was going to die."

The Giraffe pretended to be thinking hard about how to help the Hippo. He meditated for a while and then said, "Well, you've got long hair which should be able to protect you from either excessive heat or excessive cold. But your hair doesn't seem to be of much use in this kind of weather. Was this so in the past or is this an unusual occurence?" The Giraffe spoke like a sympathiser who is willing to help but has to diagnose the situation before prescribing a cure.

"I must say that I have gone through all sorts of weather but this cold spell perplexes me completely," answered the Hippo in a self-pitying tone.

Not far from where the Hippo and the Giraffe were talking there was a crater. In this crater there was a spring that produced boiling water. So hot was the water that nobody used it except for medicinal purposes. Certainly it did not do for bathing.

The Giraffe was aware that if one bathed in the pool in which this water collected, one would be burnt to death. "I have an idea", said the Giraffe after a pause. "Yours is a rather extraordinary case and I suppose it calls for an extraordinary treatment. There is a pond in the crater which has warm water." (The Giraffe knew that the water was more than just warm. It was as hot as hot could be.) "Why don't you go and dip yourself in that pool?" suggested the Giraffe with malice.

"That sounds like a bright idea. But for how long shall I have to stay in the pool? There are other things to do besides bathing in a pool, you know", commented the Hippo ironically.

"Perhaps you will have to stay in the pool until you feel all right again. At any rate, you cannot go on shivering like this indefinitely."

The Hippo grinned and shivered again, this time most disturbingly.

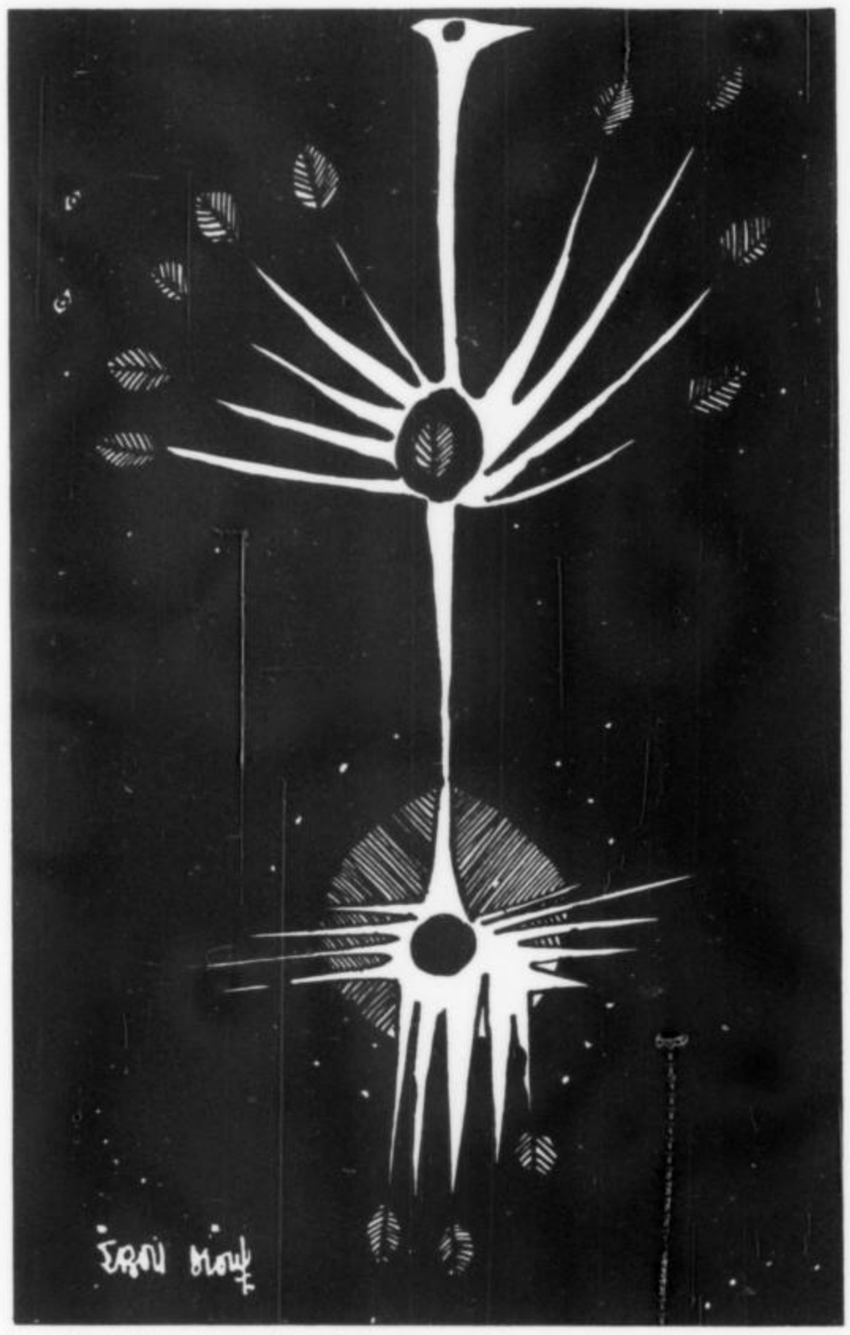
"Besides, rumour has it that the water in the pool has curing effects in case one has been bewitched or poisoned," added the Giraffe.

Apparently the Hippo was convinced. "Let me try," he said, and moved towards the crater. As he was about to descend the walls of the crater he wondered what would happen. When he reached the pool he hesitated. He stood on the verge of the pool and took out a little water to find out just how warm it was. It did not appear to be too warm. Certainly it was far from being hot. Without further investigation or thought, the Hippo plunged into the pool.

Alas! His face and the rest of the body were badly burnt. His skin blistered. Somehow he managed to close his eyes and get out of the pool, screaming. Later the skin and the hair on it peeled off leaving the Hippo a hairless animal.

Even though he was eventually cured, the Hippo is remarkably devoid of hair. As a result of the burns, his face became distorted, rendering him a really ugly-looking creature. The Giraffe, having watched what had happened, walked away quietly amused.

To this day, whenever the Hippo remembers this incident, especially how hot it became when he was in the pool, he rushes into a cool river or a lake. Many times he comes ashore to look for food. But if ever there is an animal he does not wish to set his eyes on, it is the Giraffe.



Drawing © Ibou Diouf, from *Ethiopiques*, Dakar

Why the Ostrich sticks its neck out

WHY is it that the Ostrich has such a long neck?

Long ago the Ostrich had an ordinary neck that was proportionate to the size of the rest of its body. The Ostrich made friends with the Crocodile. Animals and birds that knew the behaviour of Crocodiles approached the Ostrich and advised it not have anything to do with the Crocodile. "A Crocodile is so unpredictable and unreliable," commented an elderly animal.

The trouble with Ostriches is that even though they have voluminous bodies, they have extremely tiny heads in which there are equally tiny brains. This Ostrich would not listen to the advice of the rest of the animals for, like other Ostriches, it was foolish.

The Ostrich, having ignored the advice of other animals, went to a lake to drink. There it met its friend, the Crocodile, who had been looking for food in vain and was very hungry. "Come closer, my friend", said the Crocodile enticingly. "I am in serious trouble and I think that you could help me out if only you would."

"What's the trouble?" asked the Ostrich sympathetically as it raised its small head. "Maybe I can help you."

"One of my teeth is aching badly. I can hardly chew anything", complained the Crocodile.

"What do you want me to do then?" enquired the foolish Ostrich.

"I shall open my mouth widely", said the Crocodile, "and ask you to put your head in it so that you may have a close look and tell me exactly what is wrong with the tooth at the end of my left jaw."

"All right," agreed the unsuspecting Ostrich. As soon as the Ostrich inserted its small head in the mouth, the Crocodile shut it and tried to pull the Ostrich into the lake. Even though it was foolish, this Ostrich was young and strong. In the effort to save its head, the Ostrich almost pulled the Crocodile out of the lake.

The more they pulled in opposite directions, the more the Ostrich's neck lengthened and the more the Crocodile came ashore. The Crocodile gave up in the end and let go of the head. The result of this tug-of-war was such that the Ostrich's neck had become many times longer than its original length. On being released, the Ostrich ran fast to safety.

Up until this day the Ostrich is one of the fastest birds that walk instead of flying. Its neck is unusually devoid of feathers and it is also particularly long. The Ostrich prefers to keep away from rivers and lakes for fear that it may find the Crocodile there.

our adults. By collecting and printing the materials we are, in fact, perpetuating adult education as it was known by our forebears.

More research should be carried out to find out how traditional education can be used to make today's education more effective. The practice of telling stories is dying out and such innovations as radio are taking its place. When the elders who preserved such oral materials die, our unwritten culture dies with them.

In this experimental programme, then, we handled only traditional stories. But many other aspects could be treated, such as historical backgrounds (as remembered by elders); outstanding personalities; songs; maxims; riddles; poems; birth; marriage and death ceremonies; and proverbs.

The list of possibilities is long and exciting. The United Republic of Tanzania has more than 120 tribal groupings, each with its own way of life. Suppose only stories were worked on and that about 30 of them were gathered and printed from each tribal grouping. This would produce 3,600 stories for our adult readers. Similar treatment of poems, proverbs, etc., would provide a tremendous amount of reading material bearing the stamp of Tanzanian culture.

The United Republic of Tanzania is a young nation, only 13 years old. Before it attained political independence it was made up of many different tribes and one of the tasks facing us is to shape the former tribal groupings into a united nation.

Fortunately, there already exists a powerful unifying factor, namely the Kiswahili language. Another great force for unity is the traditional culture in which Tanzania is so rich. It is thus essential that we should gather and print in Kiswahili all our oral traditions so that they become available to Tanzanians and to the world at large.

■ **Simoni Malya**

Alfred Boulton collection, Caracas. Photo from *Bolivar le Libérateur* by A. Whitridge, F. Nathan publishers, Paris

A century and a half ago Panama was the meeting place for a vast "Continental Congress" which in its aims and conception can be considered a forerunner of today's international organizations. The Congress was the brainchild of Simon Bolivar, "The Liberator of Latin America". (Left, anonymous portrait of Bolivar painted

BOLIVAR AND THE CONGRESS OF PANAMA

A revolutionary project for a United Nations 150 years ago

by Arturo Uslar-Pietri

ON 9 December 1824, a high narrow valley in the Peruvian Andes was the setting for the battle of Ayacucho, at which General Antonio José de Sucre won a decisive and irreversible victory over the only remaining army of any consequence Spain could still muster in South America.

General de Sucre was the closest comrade in arms of Simon Bolivar, *El Libertador* (The Liberator) of Latin America. His crushing victory at Ayacucho was the culminating point in the fifteen-year struggle for independence from Spain, which had started in 1810 when a group of patriots had seized power in Caracas, and had spread, at the cost of unrelenting strife and sacrifice, from Venezuela and Argentina through Colombia, Ecuador and Chile, to the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru.

Simon Bolivar was the man largely responsible for winning political independence for this vast landmass and for shaping it into sovereign republics. The immense task he undertook embraced every aspect of what was, indeed, a genuine revolution.

By his vision and his action, he personified the spirit needed not only to achieve political independence through armed struggle against the odds in a long-drawn-out war with Imperial Spain, but also to lay the foundations for the new and complex organization of the new States and to point to the direction and role Latin America had to chart for itself in the eyes of the world.

His own role was embodied in an unrivalled combination of action and reflection, in a sense of political realities and a vision of the future, where forging new political institutions was no less important than winning battles.

In addition to having to contend with the pressing day-to-day problems of a new organization, he had to define the status and identity of Latin America to the complex international order of which it had just become a part, without the slightest experience and with few resources.

Bolivar never regarded independence as a national or local issue. In his view—and this is where his genius lay—the independence movement had to embrace the whole of Latin America. It had to be founded on close union and co-operation between the new States and take careful account of political developments in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

Significantly, two days before the battle of Ayacucho, he wrote from Lima to all the recently liberated countries, inviting them to take part in a congress whose purpose it would be to establish the closest form of union possible.

This was an idea he had had in mind for a long time. As early as 1810 when, as a yet unknown young man, he had been sent to London as a member of the diplomatic mission from the recently created Caracas junta, he spoke to an English newspaper of his intention to call on all the peoples of Latin America to unite in a confederation.

This was an idea which the founding fathers of Venezuela's independence wholeheartedly shared. In the first Constitution drafted in 1811, they touched on the possibility of

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ARTURO USLAR-PIETRI, *Venezuela's ambassador and permanent delegate to Unesco, is one of Latin America's most famous writers. Author of many novels, short stories and essays such as* La Otra América *(The Other America) he has been professor of Hispano-American literature at Columbia University (U. S. A.). His novel* Las Lanzas Coloradas *has been published in English as The Red Lances (Knopf, New York, 1962). He was recently elected a member of Unesco's Executive Board.*

in 1816.) In convening the Congress, Bolivar sought to promote the unity of Latin America by founding a great confederation of its peoples, united by a common heritage and a common ideal of liberty. Right, monument commemorating Bolivar was erected in Panama City to mark the centenary of the Congress.

Photo © Almasy, Paris

setting up a Latin-American confederation which they would be prepared to join at any time.

From the time he first took up arms, Bolivar realized that it was necessary not only to combine Venezuela and present-day Colombia into a single State but also to go further and unite the whole of Spanish America. In 1814, in the difficult and at times inauspicious days when the armed struggle was just beginning, he made a statement proclaiming: "Our native land is America".

In 1815, in the adversity of defeat, living the life of an almost penniless fugitive in Jamaica, he wrote one of the most extraordinary documents in Latin American political history. In a letter to a correspondent on the island, the publisher of an English newspaper in Kingston, he drew an uncannily accurate and penetrating picture of Latin America as it then was and as it would become.

In that admirable document, he again stressed the conviction that the new States had to be joined in political unity. "More than any man alive", he wrote, "I want to see Latin America become the greatest nation in the world, not so much on account of its size and wealth as by virtue of its freedom and its renown".

In a tone of prophecy and denunciation, he elaborated on his vision of things: "It is an awe-inspiring idea to want to shape the entire New World into a single nation with a single bond linking its parts to each other and to the whole. Since it has a common origin, a common language, common customs and a common religion, it ought to have a single government that would make a

Photo Diego Goldberg © Parimage, Paris

The tower, below, is all that remains of Panama City's old cathedral, built in 1619. Opposite page, the existing cathedral, in the heart of the modern city, displays the distinctive features of the religious architecture which developed in Central America and the Caribbean during the Spanish colonial period. Left, youthful smiles, reflection of tomorrow's hopes in Panama.

confederation of the different States that have been created... What a happy prospect it would be if the Isthmus of Panama could be for us what the Isthmus of Corinth was for the Greeks.

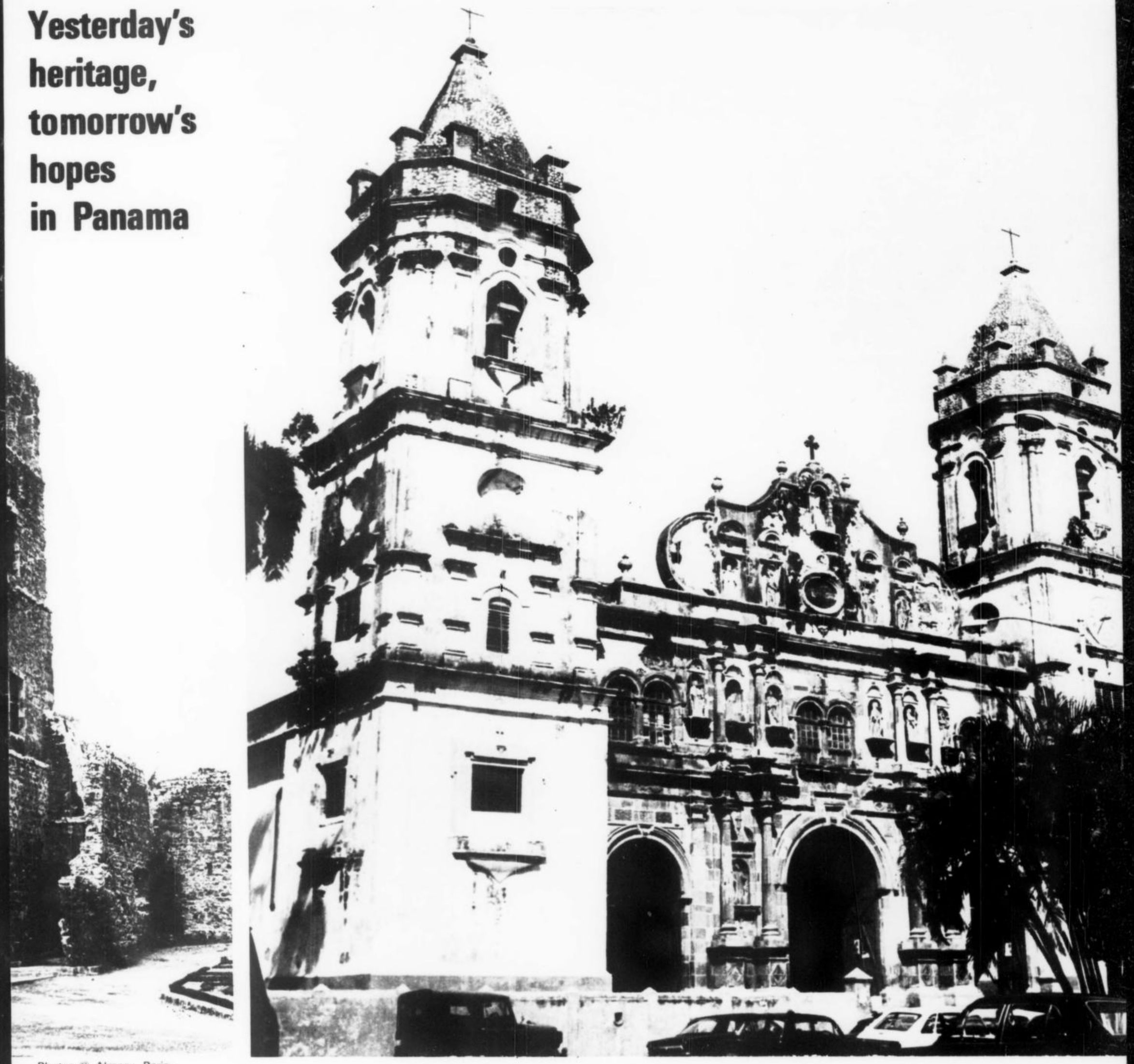
"May the day come when we shall be fortunate enough to convene in Panama an august congress of the representatives of the republics, kingdoms and empires to consider and discuss the higher interests of peace and war with the rest of the world."

When Bolivar launched this singular and momentous scheme, Latin America had still a long way to go before becoming fully independent. Yet he had the extraordinary foresight to seize on the idea that the unity of the future States would provide the mainstay for their own sovereignty. He pointed to the historical links that existed between the peoples emerging from the Spanish Empire—the unity of their customs, language and religion—and expressed the belief that the common heritage handed down from the past ought to serve as a firm and stable foundation to the structure as a whole.

Bolivar even went on to advocate the need to work for peace and cooperation through a permanent congress of all nations established in Panama, which might become the geographical focal point of world politics. Mankind had to wait for more than a century and suffered two world wars before an organization along the lines of that he had in mind came into being with the creation of first the League of Nations and then the United Nations.

When the armed struggle was resumed, he wrote from the banks of the Orinoco to the Argentine authorities on the River Plate to announce that, when the war had ended, he would invite them to join in a single association so that the rallying-call could be unity in Southern America. He expanded on this concept in the letter accompanying his invitation, in which he stated that all "Americans should

Yesterday's heritage, tomorrow's hopes in Panama



Photos © Almasy, Paris

have only one homeland, since we have achieved perfect unity in all things."

When the fortunes of battle had carried him from victory to victory and he had welded Venezuela, New Granada and Ecuador into the single republic of Colombia, he dispatched a group of plenipotentiaries to invite the independent governments of South and Central America and Mexico to a congress at which the foundations of unification were to be laid.

The instructions he gave show clearly that his intentions were not confined to concluding a temporary defence pact in order to counter the threat of a European invasion. The old regimes which had fought against revolutionary France had just organized the Holy Alliance, to defend absolute monarchy and the old social structure. One of their first aims was obviously to return the liberated colonies of Latin America to Spain.

Bolivar saw this attack on democracy, the right of nations to determine their own form of government and the tenets of political freedom as a universal issue, and he accordingly set out to convince all the embryo republics of the need for permanent and unwavering unity. There can be no doubt that he was thinking of the example set by the union of England's North American colonies and the Congress that bestowed lasting political unity on them.

As he explained to the envoys: "At this moment, there is nothing more important to the government of Colombia than the establishment of an authentically American league of nations. The proposed confederation must not be inspired exclusively by the idea of a conventional alliance for defence or retaliation. On the contrary, our association must be more closely knit than that the European powers have recently created in their attempt to deprive peoples of their freedom. Our association must be a league of sister nations. ▶

"Although until now, owing to the course taken by events, each of them has exercised sovereignty individually: if they are united, strong and resourceful, they can pull together in withstanding foreign aggression."

"You must stress upon them how necessary it is to make an immediate start to laying the foundations for a union of neighbouring States, an assembly of plenipotentiaries that would be capable of promoting the interests of the American States and of mediating in any disputes between nations which, although having customs and practices in common, may perhaps, for want of so dedicated an institution, spark off regrettable conflicts such as those that have been the scourge of other less fortunate regions."

BOLIVAR'S view of the situation inevitably invites contrast with the opinion expressed by President James Monroe of the United States when he proclaimed his famous doctrine. Whereas Monroe confined himself to announcing that the United States had decided unilaterally to oppose any attempt on the part of the European powers to conquer the New World, Bolivar visualized the new republics as coming together to form a permanent organization that would concern itself not only with defence but also with integration and action in all fields.

Bolivar was thinking primarily in terms of former Spanish America and of organizing it with a view both to averting the immediate threat and to evolving a complete policy for the future, including collaboration with the United States and balanced relations between the Americas as a whole and the rest of the world.

Bolivar had to wait almost two years, until military victory was complete and all the territory of the former Spanish Empire had won independence, before urging his proposal again.

He took this step on the eve of the battle of Ayacucho, when he wrote to the other governments from Lima inviting them to take part at last in the congress of Panama he had so earnestly striven for.

In his long endeavours to create a free America, Bolivar's thinking was dictated by three main ideas. The first was to create a tightly-knit confederation, united in its political action, of most of the countries which had emerged from the dissolution of the Spanish Empire and were closely connected by history, language and culture.

The second idea, which perfected and enhanced the first, was to draw up a sort of pact of assistance and co-operation between all the American States, including those with different languages and origins such as the United States, Brazil and Haiti.

The third and final idea, which was more wide-ranging and exalted in concept, was to create that "august Congress" of all the governments of the world in order "to consider and discuss the higher interests of peace and war".

His mind broke free from the narrow confines of the commonplace and strove to survey the destiny of his people in the setting of world politics and of its prospects and trends.

In view of the power wielded by the Old World and the threat of the Holy Alliance, much larger and more powerful political units had to be set up, as the English settlers had done in the North and yet, at the same time, allowance had to be made for the fact that the countries of America had situations and interests in common with the States and groups in the rest of the world.

In so many words, Bolivar was visualizing a new international order and a new balance of forces between continents based on law and justice in an endeavour to secure peace. This made him an extraordinary precursor of the legal and political movements that have risen to prominence in the world of today.

Bolivar felt that what was needed was what he used to call a "balancing of the universe"—what we today would call a new international order. He observed that the newly liberated countries of Latin America could not achieve and maintain the full dignity of their independence unless they worked through a wide-ranging and solidly-based confederation. Now that he could act, he finally convened the Congress of Panama, thus giving substance to a project that until then had appeared to be a mere idealist's dream.

THE following States were invited to attend the Congress of Panama: Colombia (which consisted of the present-day Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador) Mexico, Central America (comprising Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador), Peru, present-day Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Brazil and the United States. For various reasons, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Chile were unable to be present, although they had accepted the invitation.

The extraordinary meeting eventually took place in Panama City on 26 June 1826. The instructions of the delegation of Peru, which were those dictated by Bolivar himself, laid down the following major objectives:

The creation of a permanent confederation, union and league, in both peace and war, against any nation attempting to dominate America in part or as a whole. Mutual guarantees of independence, freedom and territorial integrity. No conclusion of alliances with foreign powers except by mutual agreement. Submission of all conflicts to the permanent Congress without recourse to war. Outlawing of the slave trade and creation of a joint military force. Lastly, condemnation of war and conquest in the relations between peoples and governments.

Bolivar wanted an organization that would have the strength and independence to exert an influence on local separatist movements. He was thinking not only of a permanent representative body to assume that important function but also of the creation of a standing army that would not be directly answerable to any one State. This principle was accepted inasmuch as it was agreed that a permanent force of 60,000 men and a confederate navy would be set up with contributions from member countries.

This was the first time in history that such a confederation had been created to promote the union of free nations through peace and progress rather than to triumph in war.

AND yet this was not everything Bolivar was seeking. Men with a narrow parochial outlook, who thought only of their immediate short-term interests, could not countenance so far-reaching and revolutionary a project and they introduced qualifications and restrictions that largely distorted the true nature of that noble enterprise.

Perhaps it was ahead of its time. So forward-looking and purposeful a vision of the destiny of Latin America could scarcely be accepted in a spirit of enthusiasm and good faith by people with all the petty interests and prejudices of a society which had still not shaken off its backward colonial past.

Bolivar's unstinting endeavours did not live on after him. The history of Latin America in the 19th century was one of fragmentation instead of union and confederation. The prospects which he had outlined could not have materialized at that moment in time. Today, however, they have gained a new lease of life and sound an overwhelming note of urgency. The peoples of Latin America are increasingly convinced that they have to integrate and unite if they are to make their presence felt on the world scene.

Bolivar's thinking and acts and the imposing project of the Congress of Panama are the surest foundation for this grand design. The masterly lesson and undying example of a century and a half ago concern not Latin Americans alone but the host of mankind in the Third World who are now emerging in search of a more just international order.

■ **Arturo Uslar-Pietri**

Letters to the editor

REACHING THE LESS ABLE STUDENT

Sir,

As a result of work with lower ability secondary school students leading up to Universal Children's Day, I wish to draw attention to a very real problem associated with materials and publications emanating from the various agencies of the U. N. The essence of this problem is concerned with the vocabulary and comprehension level used in the publications. Having previewed a wide selection of materials I was disappointed to find the poor provision afforded the less able student.

Disparaging remarks about "standards" and surprise may greet these remarks on what may appear a very minor cause for complaint; especially in the wider context of the "Courier's" usual correspondence. This can only be judged against the positive aim of widening one audience receptive to ideas and knowledge disseminated through U.N. publications.

I am aware that the "Courier" seeks a wider audience than the lower ability classroom, and under usual circumstances such a letter as this may not be considered relevant, but the August-September 1976 "Destination Unesco" issue gives rise to the issues involved. The excellent comic strip idea fell short of the mark simply because it was too long, covered too much ground, involving many complex concepts, and thus alienated many students initially drawn by the visual impact and quality of presentation.

It is especially important that the U. N. take the lead in this field as other agencies, perhaps less objective, are providing the only current source. Wider recognition should be given to "language levels" and the question of "writing materials down" for lower ability students everywhere.

Graham Speight
Bellerive, Tasmania

BEWARE OF STEREOTYPES

Sir,

My family has subscribed to the "Courier" for nearly 15 years and I have never written to thank you for the pleasure and knowledge which we have gained from it: the beautiful reproductions of art objects, the information about ancient and alien cultures, the fascinating new scientific discoveries, and always, whenever a problem is discussed, information is given about the various solutions which are being tried.

I say to my friends: Subscribe to the "Unesco Courier"; it is the most informative and the most hopeful magazine in the world. It really makes me feel that we are one world, that we do belong to one great human community. I found the August-September, 1976 issue inventive, colourful and designed to convey a lot of information in brief, to "teach by entertaining".

I observed that the little person going on the adventure of discovery comes "from 137 countries" but "belongs to the world". He was drawn in such a way that he could, indeed, have come from almost any country. But there was no mistaking his sex: he is a little boy.

Your choice of a boy for this voyage of discovery perpetuates in the minds of readers the old and untrue idea that little boys are more curious, more adventuresome, more receptive to knowledge, than little girls, and this makes me very sad, particularly since I realize that the stereotype is so accepted that no one bothers to question it.

True, the Indian Ocean appears briefly, first in a traditional role of damsel in distress, crying, and feeling neglected. She becomes a source briefly for some interesting information, but she does not make up for the fact that the central seeker of knowledge is a male child.

It would have complicated your task, or the task of the inventive team, man and woman, who devised the issue, to draw a boy and a girl, but I feel strongly that they should have done this, or else flown in the face of tradition and made the adventurer a little girl. If the oppression of women is the basic oppression on which all others are based, then instances such as your well intentioned bias in your very instructive little fiction cannot be overlooked. Think about it.

Meanwhile, thanks again, and best wishes for a millennium of peace and new justice to all minorities, including women, during which you can continue your good work.

Jean Mallinson
West Vancouver, Canada

"DESTINATION UNESCO"

Sir,

I have read the "Unesco Courier" since 1954. It has a responsibility to bring within the purview of its readers throughout the world vital and important social, cultural and scientific events that make our "Global village" unique and interesting.

The theme of the August-September 1976 issue of "Destination Unesco" should never have appeared in a regular number. It would have been novel to issue it as a special booklet, or to have published it as a paperback. But the reduction of the written word and information to cartoons in the entire issue was, in my view, a monumental waste.

Save cartoons for those who cannot view reality, and cannot perceive without visual explanations in the form of cartoons.

Jerome Frank Slezak
Lakewood, Ohio, U. S. A.

Sir,

If it is your intention to reach the generation of plus or minus 10 to 16-year-olds, I think the creation of the "Unesco boy" in your August-September 1976 issue is perfect. Never has an issue been so well read (by all of our family) as this one. Well done !

Pieter Lindenbergh
Rockanje, Netherlands

WHERE WAS NASRUDIN BORN?

Sir,

Ivan Sop's article about Nasrudin Hodja ("The World of Humour", April 1976) was most interesting, but the author raises a point on which I disagree with him: he doubts that Nasrudin was of Turkish origin.

Efforts to trace the place and date of birth of a folk hero in the oral literature of any country may end up in disappointment or lead to unjustified assertions. However, according to oral sources (backed up by various texts) Nasrudin Hodja was born in 1209 in the Turkish village of Horto, the son of a certain Abdullah and his wife Sidika.

But let's suppose for a moment that Nasrudin wasn't of Turkish origin and that the tales about him come from other places. In that case they would have come via Islam and thus through the Arabic or Persian languages used by the learned of that period. As part of scholarly literature they would thus never have reached the level of peasant communities. Yet they are recounted in a Turkish which is absolutely pure and in which no Arabic or Persian terms are used.

As for the spread of these anecdotes "from Morocco to China" and "from Siberia to the Arabian Peninsula", most of those who carried them from country to country were the many peoples of Turkic origin, during their migrations, as well as the States and empires founded by these peoples.

It is therefore unthinkable that Nasrudin's origin should be lost within the anonymity of the world of Islam. The Turkic world is certainly integrated therein, but has succeeded in preserving its traditions and its popular arts.

Halûk Tarcan
Ethnomusicologist
Paris, France

BOOKSHELF

UNESCO BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

■ **Innovation in Science Education—World-wide,** by Albert V. Baez. 1976. 249 pp. (40 F).

■ **Broadcast Training Techniques,** by F. R. Dance. 1976. 122 pp. (20 F).

■ **Sport for the Physically Handicapped,** by Sir Ludwig Guttmann. 1976. 53 pp. Free of charge.

■ **Communication Policies in Yugoslavia,** by Zdravdo Leković and Mihalo Bjelica. 1976. 66 pp. (12 F).

■ **Statistics on Science and Technology in Latin America:** Experience with Unesco Pilot Projects, 1972-1974, by Schiller Thébaud. (Statistical Reports and Studies Series, No. 20). 1976. 76 pp. (10 F).

■ **Culture, Society and Economics for a New World** is the theme of Unesco's international quarterly *Cultures* (Vol. III, No. 4, 1976). Each issue 22 F; annual subscription 75 F.

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OTHER BOOKS

■ **The Roles and Images of Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,** edited by Douglas Radcliff-Umstead. University of Pittsburgh Publications on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Vol. III. 1975. 159 pp.

■ **Women and World Development,** edited by Irene Tinker and Michèle Bo Bramsen. 1976. 228 pp. ($ 3.50); **Women and World Development: An Annotated Bibliography,** by Marya Buvinić. 1976. 162 pp. ($ 2.50). Both published by the Overseas Development Council, Washington D. C.

■ **The Great Universe of Kota:** Stress, Change and Mental Disorder in an Indian Village, by G. M. Carstairs and R. L. Kapur. The Hogarth Press, London. 1976. 176 pp. (£ 5.50).

■ **Energy Policy for the Rural Third World,** by Arjun Makhijani. International Institute for Environment and Development, London. 1976. 58 pp. (80p or $ 1.50).

■ **Environment and Society in Transition: World Priorities?** edited by Boris Pregel, Harold D. Lasswell and John McHale. Papers from the Second International Conference on Environment and Society in Transition held by the American Division of the World Academy of Art and Science and the New York Academy of Sciences, 1974. Published by the New York Academy of Sciences, 1975. 277 pp.

UNESCO NEWSROOM

'SAVE THE ACROPOLIS' APPEAL

Contributions to the international campaign for the preservation of the Acropolis should be sent:

■ **in pounds sterling:** Unesco Acropolis Account No. 7286088, Lloyds Bank International Ltd., P.O. Box 241, 100 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5HP

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■ **in French francs:** Compte Unesco Acropole No. 5-770.176-6, Société Générale, Agence AG, 45 Avenue Kléber, 75116 Paris.

Payments in drachmas can be made to The Bank of Greece, P.O. Box No. 105, Athens, Greece, for Unesco Acropolis Account No. 613.106.

Contributions can also be made in the form of a bank cheque or international money order, made out to "Unesco Co-Action project ACROPOLIS", and sent to: Unesco Co-Action Programme, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

Unesco's 1977 poster-calendar

For its 1977 poster-calendar, Unesco has chosen a design by a young artist from Mauritius, Imteyaz Hoosain Sumodhee. The design symbolizes the fourfold vocation of Unesco in the fields of education, science, culture and communication represented as a single stream of human endeavour. It was chosen by an international jury of artists from among 38 entries submitted by competitors from African countries south of the Sahara.

Growing world water crisis

Reasonable supplies of drinking water are unavailable for at least 1/5 of the world's city dwellers and for 3/4 of its rural people. The day is drawing near when scarcity of water of acceptable quality will become a crippling obstacle to the well-being of mankind. It is in order to stimulate world action on these crucial issues that the United Nations Water Conference will be held at Mar del Plata, Argentina, from 14 March 1977.

Record sum raised for Unesco's Co-Action Programme

On 7 January 1977 a special Unesco award was presented to pupils of Belfast Model School for Girls (U.K.) who in three weeks raised £ 1,310 for Unesco's Co-Action Programme. Through this programme schools, organizations and individuals in the industrially developed countries can assist self-help projects in the developing world by means of UNUM cheques (Unesco Unit of Money; 1 UNUM = $ 1) which they send direct to the project of their choice. In the last two years an estimated $ 380,000 worth of UNUM cheques have been sold by Unesco and by Co-Action sponsoring organizations in 14 Unesco Member States. Those wishing to know more about the Co-Action Programme should write to: Unesco, Co-operative Action Programme, OPI, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris.

141 Unesco Member States

Angola, Mozambique, Papua-New Guinea and the Seychelles were admitted to Unesco at the 19th session of the Organization's General Conference, held in Nairobi (Kenya) from 26 October to 30 November 1976. This brings the total number of Unesco's Member States to 141. The youngest of these States, the Seychelles became independent on 18 June 1976. A former British colony, this archipelago of 80 islands in the Indian Ocean has an area of 376 sq. km and a population of 60,000. The capital is Victoria on Mahé island.

Unesco observes International Peace Day

Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco, welcomed representatives of Pope Paul VI to Unesco HQ in Paris on 11 January 1977 for a ceremony marking the tenth anniversary of International Peace Day. This is the second time that Unesco has been honoured in connexion with International Peace Day. In 1974 the Organization was awarded the John XXIII Peace Prize for its work in promoting human rights and international understanding.

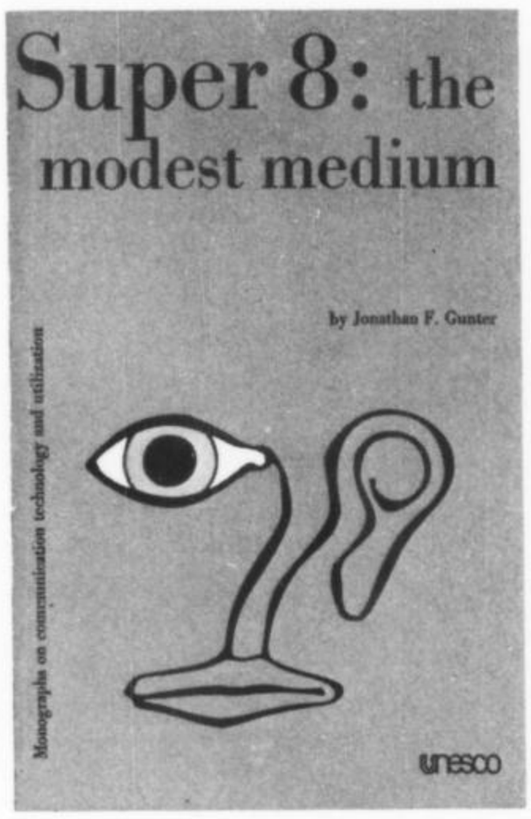
Imp. BRODARD et TAUPIN, COULOMMIERS. — Dépôt légal C 1 — Février 1977 — IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE *(Printed in France)*

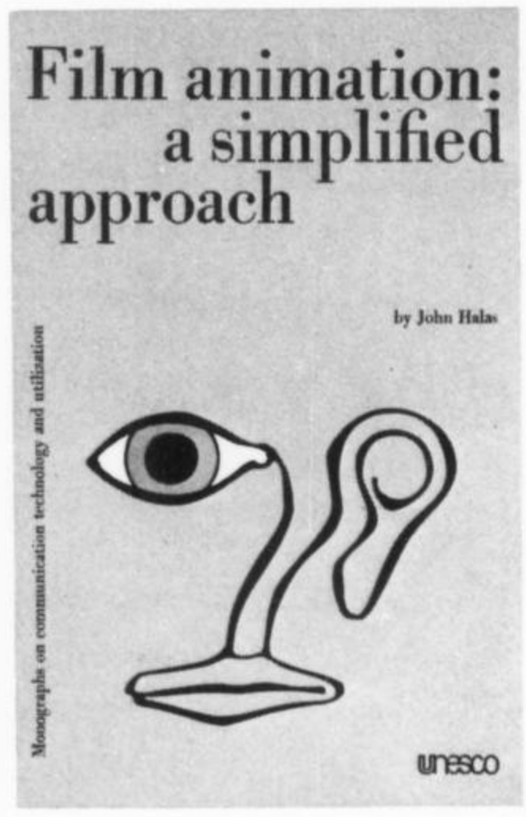
Just published

A new Unesco series on practical aspects of communication technology

The development of 8 mm film as a professional tool is described by Jonathan F. Gunter in this booklet. It provides a handy reference for audiovisual production centres, film and television schools, and television organizations and communication planners looking for less costly inputs. Contains a review of available equipment.

92 pages, illus.
10 French francs





John Halas, one of the top figures in film animation, outlines techniques and short cuts in time, materials and facilities which can permit small production teams to utilize the potential of animation even with modest budgets.

92 pages, illus.
10 French francs

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Painted churches of Lake Tana in Ethiopia

"The Announcement to Zacharias", a 19th-century work,
one of the innumerable paintings in the church
of Ura Kidané Mehret, on Lake Tana, in Ethiopia *(see article page 13)*.